

DIG IN! WHAT TO PLANT NOW FOR LATE-SEASON COLOR P. 24

# This Old House

SEPTEMBER 2007

Dealing  
with  
**Household  
Disasters**  
P.108

## 49 easy home upgrades

- New kitchen and bath products
- Projects for indoors and out
- Expert advice to get it all done

**HOW TO**  
Build a backyard fire pit  
Revive a worn porch floor  
Install decorative tile



THISOLDHOUSE.COM AOL KEYWORD: THIS OLD HOUSE

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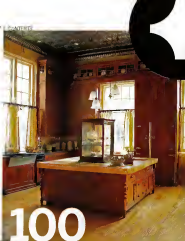
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Cover photography by Mark Lund  
Styling by Matthew Rutledge



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Restoration foreman

The 2,000 antique tools in this carpenter's  
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THE FUND-GATE MICROGRAPH TO ENTER ON PAGE

[illegible]

mail



### Two Kitchens

My husband and I looked forward to removing TGM each month for the great ideas, tips, methods, and introductions to new materials that help us improve our old house. However, we were perplexed by "Get Out and Stay Out" (June). While the article featured several lovely outdoor living spaces, the Seneca-Mono.com template with the outdoor kitchen seemed wasteful and redundant. We lose to cook and entertain, but are stumped. Why would one build a room, place indoor/outdoorers when a complete indoor kitchen sits right steps away inside?

SAATHI PRASAD/DEEPTI KUMAR/REKHA/2010

### Underground Heating-Oil Tanks

I liked that I enjoyed your article ("Not Too Late, June: an essay about one last time homeown-  
er's nightmare experience with a leaking under-  
ground tank") How about a future story on how a  
homeowner with an underground oil tank should  
proceed to have it removed and replaced?

DANIEL HARRIS WITH STEPHEN WARD

The editors regularly revisit the topic in October 2002, see [theoldhouse.com/shortcuts](http://theoldhouse.com/shortcuts). First, be aware that regulations on inspections, permits, certifications, and procedures vary by state and municipality. The best place to start researching

📍 how to reach us

## THE REVIEW

Access: This CD-ROM requires the Adobe® Acrobat® 5.0 software (www.adobe.com/acrobat).  
 \$49.95. CD-ROM: www.mhhe.com

These include a full-text, online, and/or the document. Full-text articles will be online for short- and long-term access for all users. For more information, call 800-354-9712.

RESEARCH DESIGN

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## 1540

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## A good example of a complex variable is

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with your state's department of environmental protection. Your leasing oil provider or a waste-injection company should also have information

### Couples and Remodeling

My husband and I are finishing a handcrafted log home that has taken us years to design. Help build, general contract, etc.

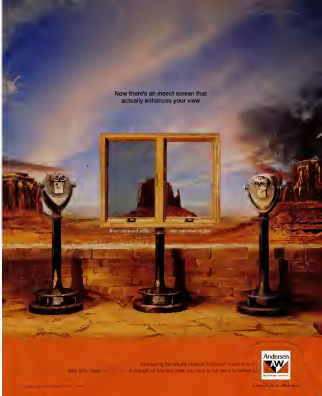
On keeping within budget: We know where the bargain section of every store was and were there every time we walked in. I dickered with people for better prices. We traded services for work. Most of our carpenter told us to do the time-consuming, noisy stuff, and they checked it over before finishing the rest of the job.

Grinumer: "Love, laughter and liquor" is what we say got us through and kept us married. You lost the stress, lack of sleep, and problems like over you're done. Would we do it again? You bet—the lovin'g curve is done, we've got our people, and we are past being the optimistic unrealistic newbies. We are now the crazy and probably need psychiatric help rookies!

VIOLATED-PATIENT NAME:

## corrections

**Cover and p. 79** is "Get Out and Stay Out," June is the cemetery we suggested to credit landscape designer Nick Deas. Nick Deas Garden Design, Los Angeles, CA, 323-628-9850, [nickdeasgarden.com](http://nickdeasgarden.com). Additionally, the current source for the chairs is Brown Jordan International Inc., Pompano Beach, FL, 800.763.4122 or [www.brownjordan.com](http://www.brownjordan.com).



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TABLE 1. *Estimated and observed values of the parameters of the model for the 1997-1998 season*

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## around the HOUSE

EDITED BY KELLY BURTON

### TEACHING TOOLS

One man's vintage  
collection is a blueprint to  
authentic restorations

While inspecting an 18th-century window in a young carpenter'sed ingraham decided that using the same hand plane that originally cut the window's profiles would help him make a more authentic record. He'd seen a reader use 18th-century tools in his grandfather's workshop years before he'd started doing his coppin' and nee'n work and decided to re-create the window's original workmanship, right down to the machine. "Everyone appreciates old houses," he says. "But few people know what was involved in constructing them out back there. They'd be amazed." Since then, McElroy's the Vermont restoration carpenter has collected 2,500 tools, among them a wealth of 200-year-old chisels, saws, squares and, of course, his glazier. He can match each tool to the kind of woodwork it made and the demands of its manufacture—knowledge he uses to educate people about fading pre-industrial building methods and, sometimes, to deliver his innovations. In other words, his inspiration will help his collection to stay (except the recent pre-1920 examples, of which he has ample working reproductions), even though he knows he could save time with power tools. Fortunately for the old-house owner everywhere, he's a more interested in being America's building history.

—SHELLEY KAM JACET



### SPEAKING OF OLD TOOLS



#### The Shingle's Wife

The best shingle shape of shingles is the product of the pre-18th-century hand cut, or free cut, used to make them.



#### Carver's Choice

Carver's Choice is the best shingle shape of shingles. It's the product of the pre-18th-century hand cut, or free cut, used to make them.



#### Nail Biter

The best shingle shape of shingles is the product of the pre-18th-century hand cut, or free cut, used to make them.



## Save on Heat Costs With Lessons From a 500-Year-Old House

Before it's lost, Tudor-style houses built in the 15th-century country side demonstrate age-old energy-efficient techniques that provide lessons in a combination of their walls and their construction to shield the space between their timber-framed timbers (or that's what the masons of the 15th century called them) from the cold winds of winter storms and sometimes from the heat of the sun. The masons created "weather-lightness" and better built around the fireplace, roof, doors, and windows—the very spots where modern houses lose 30 percent of their heating and cooling energy. It's the architecture of the house, says Anne Hinkley of the Tudor House, which sponsored the study. Of course, there are other cities in the Atlantic region where the techniques applied to one house can be used, but it's a good idea to look at the energy efficiency of individual components like windows and doors and paying more attention to how they fit together to make "the other half" of the house be more efficient," says Doug Anderson, a program manager for the EPA's Energy Star Program. "So when you're looking at energy efficiency, you need to look at the whole house, not just the parts." —KARLA E. SCHWARTZ

For more on promoting your home, see [thisoldhouse.com/tobts](http://thisoldhouse.com/tobts)

## ORIGINS QUESTION

While working as a microwave-mounting tube for a radio system, Dr. Perry Spencer of Raytheon Corporation in Massachusetts developed a series of situations. A nearby bar began regularly mailing to his front pocket. Curious, Spencer then placed a microwave at his front pocket, which popped, making egg, which exploded. At the end of the first microwave oven, there was the patent cooked up.

A. 1950 B. 1955 C. 1950 D. 1957

(See "Origins Answer" page 25)

## 10 USES

## EGG CARTONS

Egg cartons impressively under finger clogs. The standard modern—known as a 24's—is packing perimeter is made of molded recycled paper. You can get the paper get another life by using the cartons in these resourceful ways. —MARK FORBES

**1. START SEEDLINGS.** Cut off the lid, fill each cup with potting soil, and plant some seeds. Once the seedlings sprout, add each cup to the tray and plant in—up and all.

**2. UNRAVE THE BARE.** TCM technical editor (and former rack star) Wendy Mack Powers once used egg cartons to hold up her hair while she was taking to the stage and while she was recording.

**3. FEED RABBIT.** Turn off the lid, thread string through holes at each corner of the lid, tie the cup halfway with the lid, and hang it in a tree.

**4. FINE THE SING.** Melt candle scraps into a bowl, then fill each cup halfway with wax. Carefully feed the wax over the sweater and let it cool. Each cup can now serve as a fire starter—just light the edge.

**5. SHOWER ORGANIZER.** The cartons are ideal for organizing small objects (like hairbrushes, toothbrushes, etc.) in the shower.

**6. ORGANIZE THE KITCHEN.** Use your cartons as organizers for spices and herbs (or even for organizing your kitchen). For this use, keep the lid.

**7. HANG UP YOUR SPARE LIGHTS.** These days, with all the lights and holiday lights, it's hard to find a place to hang them. Use egg cartons to hang them. For this use, keep the lid.

**8. SHIP CHINA.** Being stiff and lightweight makes egg cartons an excellent replacement for Styrofoam packing peanuts.

**9. MAKE A FAN.** Turn up egg cartons in a great, old-fashioned way. If the fan is a two-speed, add dry cotton plants. See day? Darker is better first.

**10. GIVE A BATH.** How to wash? Use the egg cartons to hold up your hair while you're taking a bath. For this use, keep the lid.



# OBSERVATIONS OF A TOOTHBRUSH

I spend my entire life gazing out over bathrooms. And let me tell you, these panoramic Venetian Bronze® views aren't too shabby. Directly in front of me, I see faucet. To the east, I see towel ring. To the west, towel bar. Robe hook to the north. I can even see showerhead—providing there's not too much steam. Or so people standing there bashing their teeth.



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## 5 QUICK 1-HOUR IMPROVEMENTS

Got 60 minutes? Here are five projects you could've finished already.

Sunsets slipped away and none of your  
 aggression materialized? The crew from  
 This Old House TV know a few projects  
 that take less than an hour but deliver a  
 big impact. (That's not including time to  
 buy your tools.) —ALIX SANDON

2 || RICHARD TRETHEWY,  
PLUMBER AND  
HEATING EXPERT.

You can't see this, but you'll feel it if you have forced air heating: change the furnace filter—before you start the heating season. You'll notice a difference in the air quality, and your furnace will run more efficiently. **Time: 10 minutes.**



### **2 | FORMER CODE SIGNATURES**

Power wash a brick walkway. Layers of dirt and moss build up in a path's crevices, look dingy & are easy to rent a power washer and hook it up to your hose. Just make sure you start with a low pressure nozzle, only go up as high if you don't see results. Afterward, the whole entry will look fresh and bright. Time: 30 minutes.



Figure 1

TIP

Dial 811 now to avoid 911 later

There's a new national hotline—800—to call before beginning any excavations. Punch in the three digits (easier to remember than various local numbers), and a utility crew shows up to map out the position of pipelines, wires, and other underground infrastructure free of charge—meaning you won't have to worry about a charge of the electrical kind when you start to shovel.



#### 4 | HOW ARE WE, MASTERS CARPENTERS?

I once dressed up some first door casings in a house I was selling. On top, along the outside edges, I added this new bead molding, which has a nice ogee detail on it. I added to the corners and caulked it on with 4d finishing nails. It turned each doorway into a nice detail. Time: 40 minutes per doorway.



5.1 異種言語の辞書検索, 405

Wo are leav'g it, but resealing the tub is one of those things that can change your day, no? Well, not really. Simply scrape off the old stuff (don't fill the gap with a fresh bead of silicone), sand acrylic walls. A tip I learned from the pros: Fill the tub with water to expand the gap as the caulk dries, so it won't crack later when you put your weight on it. **Time: 80 minutes.**



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STANLEY HUSTON



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\*These figures are preliminary estimates; for details see the accompanying press release. †The number of deaths is based on the WHO's final report on the 1997-1998 dengue outbreak in Hong Kong, which was published in the *Lancet* in 1999. ‡The above figures are based on data from the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department.



## Reduced-Calorie Concrete

IS IT BETTER WHY ISN'T YOUR CONTRACTOR USING IT?

Five years ago, this Old House brought a revolutionary building material called autoclaved, aerated concrete—a concrete look-alike that's half as heavy, better insulating, and easier to cut. Thanks to a recipe of powdered steamed autoclaving ("Munich block," *House* issue 2566) (like foaming, people like) usually found in the homebuilding, why? because it needed to be imported from Europe, it wasn't mentioned in the code books, and the few sources knew the first thing about it. Since it's in the books, at least those of the manufacturers are based in the United States, and the International Masonry Institute counts at least 25,000 contractors trained to work with it. It also costs more than concrete but makes up for that by being easy to handle. Our editors had a good victory moment discovering how easy it was—with a hand saw. OK, but as its own isn't the best reason to build a house with it. But consider that way on the inside. Tools and utility bills to work on building. It costs about \$107 per 100-lb block (plus \$12 square foot). Lower costs at [www.aac-usa.com](http://www.aac-usa.com).



## DESTINATIONS

### St. Augustine, Florida

We know the school year just started but know about an early bird trip to St. Augustine, Florida—historically called as the "oldest wooden adobe house" in the United States? Whether that's true or not, it's really true. But since St. Augustine is the oldest city we've got in this country, you'll find plenty of houses and sites that are either ancient, by U.S. standards, just beyond the massive 17th-century Spanish fortification called Castillo de San Marcos on the Atlantic coastline. St. George Street winds about a dozen buildings and residences dating back to the city's Spanish Colonial era (1565–1822). About all St. George is the Spanish streets. Historic Jones Street (1875) Open to visitors. It features open-house events with a lot of brick walls made of coquina (a crude limestone) and a dramatic second floor balcony. Another old school, Flagler College, built in the 1930s as the Ponca de Lucas Hotel stands as a reminder of the Spanish Revival house revival. Visit [www.staugustine.com](http://www.staugustine.com).

—JOHN F. FORD



ABOVE: Founded in 1565, St. Augustine celebrates its 450th birthday this month. The town of Flagler College is in the building's water tower. ABOVE: Flagler's work in the 19th century was a residence (the oldest wooden schoolhouse in the country) after the school.

## ORIGINS ANSWER



C. 1000 Bayshore's Boston-based owner, about 100,000 sq ft and weighed 750 pounds. It took 12 years for the company—under its owner, James—its first the more compact, 90-pound Redwood. That was sold for \$495. New information sent us links to \$50 and even more than 50 million U.S. homes.

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## BATH DESIGN



**Problem:**  
The old attic bath had a makeshift layout—and decades of grime.

**Solution:**  
**Gut it, rearrange the fixtures, and add period details. Here's how >>**

BY AMANDA LEBRY  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUND

MANY AN OLD HOUSE comes with evidence of a not-quite-so-old ancestor. When the owners of the Woodclaster County, New York, home moved in, they took one look at the attic bath's circa 1960 "update" and closed the door—for five years. "There was a filthy metal shower in the middle of the room, a tiny sink and toilet, and layers of peeling vinyl flooring," says the woman of the house. The family focused their attention on other areas of the Queen Anne house until, finally the lack of a bath cost the attic playroom—the family has four children—became too inconvenient to bear. They had already gutted the space, literally throwing the shower out the window, when designers Rick and Lisa O'Leary, who were working downstairs on the kitchen renovation, came up for a look.

Rick helped the family determine the new layout and sketched the period-evoking ceiling treatment. The rest of the design ideas, from the antique Chinese chest that serves as a vanity to the painted wall niches (center and right of the tub), were the wife's, culled from years of clipping magazines and taking pictures of favorite architectural elements. "I hired carpenters to recreate some of the woodwork from earlier houses," she says. "They hinged up the new white-washed oak doors with chains to make them look old." She purchased the vintage olive-foot tub from a salvage store. Even the mirrors looking the way ages makes sense: "My son has pretty much taken it over," says the wife. "It's the only way we can still get ready at the same time in the morning."

Now the thoughtfully recreated space fits the character of the house, and the household has a much-needed third bath. "My son has pretty much taken it over," says the wife. "It's the only way we can still get ready at the same time in the morning."



**BEFORE** Much of the attic was unfinished storage space. **AFTER** Plaid molding adds old-house details to the new bathroom's vaulted ceiling. Areas of vintage finds, including the olive-foot tub and antique Chinese chest, and modern elements, such as the metal sink and wall-mounted faucet, gives it shape and interest. Forest sink, Glacier Lake wall color and Nordic Dwell trim join from Benjamin Moore make the space fresh and inviting.





**TOP LEFT** The homeowners brought the antique Chinoiserie cabinet with mother-of-pearl and topped it with a marble-veneer sink from Restoration Hardware and wall-mounted California French powder fittings. **TOP RIGHT** Storage niches built in between double toilet bowls. A freestanding tub relocated this walk-in shower into the half-bath double-duty **BOTTOM** Reclaimed floorboards and window casings with polished details led the bath to the end of the 1930s house.

## The Plan >> Redo the dirty, dysfunctional attic bath without changing its footprint.

### What They Did

- 1 | GUTTED THE BATH** removing the shower stall from the center of the room, as well as the other fixtures, while maintaining the old footprint.
- 2 | PLACED A VINTAGE TUB UNDER THE WINDOW** and equipped it with a hand shower so bathers can soak or spray. All the plumbing was updated.
- 3 | SHIFTED THE TOILET AND REDESIGNED IT** in the wall, making it less noticeable and creating more open floor space in the room.
- 4 | MOVED THE SINK** away from the window and closer to the door for better circulation.
- 5 | CREATED TWO BUILT-IN STORAGE NICHS** on either side of the bathtub, borrowing from the unfinished attic space behind the walls.
- 6 | BUILT THE EXISTING CLOSET** for linen storage.



Learn how other homeowners solve some bath design problems at [houzzhouse.com/bath-design](http://houzzhouse.com/bath-design)



**BEFORE** A shower stall in the corner of the room under the ridge beam—the only spot it would fit—hogged floor space. The toilet and sink were rearranged into a corner. **AFTER** Relocating the shower with a tub added both function and a focal point, moving the vanity up front and reworking the toilet preserved open space. Tubular splash-joints change.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 127

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## KITCHEN DESIGN

**Problem:**  
No room for a close-knit extended  
family to gather and cook together

**Solution:**  
**Open the kitchen up  
to the dining room and  
create a center island  
hangout. Here's how >>**

WHEN THE KITCHEN under second half, a central key  
can definitely prove deeper in the furnace. Alfredo  
and Isadora Raposo of Basking, New Jersey, knew  
when they bought their 1950s ranch house five years  
ago that the 12-by-16-foot kitchen, located by a great  
view, was less than ideal for big get-togethers. "From  
by the first thing, off the bat," says Alfredo. He and  
Isadora, who owns the United States from their native  
Brazil as children, now have two kids of their own,  
ages 12 and 14, and an extended family of more than  
30 relatives who gather at their house every weekend.  
"We cook a lot, and there wasn't room for everyone  
to be together," Alfredo says. With dated appliances,  
an awkward peninsula, and no space for a large table,  
the kitchen couldn't handle the family gatherings that  
are central to the Raposos' way of life.

To help them in their quest for a larger kitchen,  
Alfredo—an HVAC contractor by day and a hotel  
bustler by night—and his wife, a staff writer,  
turned to daughter Linda McLaughlin of American  
Woodmark, a cabinet manufacturer. Her solution:  
Make room for a big island by taking down the wall  
to the dining room. Alfredo called these islands—a  
plumber, an electrician, and a carpenter—to handle  
everything from removing the wall to installing floor  
tile, appliances, lighting, and the island. The cabinets  
were installed by Lowe's, the exclusive supplier of the  
Sherrillwood series the Raposos chose.

Now when the whole family gathers, there's room  
for several cooks and many bystanders. "We'll put all  
the kids in the dining room while so they can eat, and  
then all the adults will hang out at the island," says 39-  
year-old Alfredo, who calls the house his happy chaos.  
"Our guests have come one hour, and I plan to stay  
in this house even longer than the previous owner,"  
he says with conviction. "It was 92 when he left."



**BEFORE:** A peninsula squeezed the 12-by-16-foot sub-  
liminal kitchen. **AFTER:** The homeowners chose Sherrillwood  
Alfredo-jeweled cherry cabinets for their traditional  
European look, granite countertops and stainless appliances  
for sleekness, and the hardwood look composite  
floor for its low-maintenance.



BY BILL GORDON  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID PHOTOGRAPHY INC.



"The big, curving island is the key to the kitchen. There's plenty of work surface, and there's room for five people to sit comfortably around it." —LISA GALLAGHER, RTI INTERIOR DESIGNER

## The Plan

» Demolish the kitchen and dining room wall to create a crowd-pleasing new space

### What They Did

1. **DEMOLISHED A PENINSULA** that jutted out into the center of the room. The peninsula made it hard for more than one cook to work and left space for only a small table on the other side.
2. **TOOK OUT THE WALL** dividing the kitchen from the dining room, blending the two spaces with an open plan.
3. **ADDED AN L-SHAPED ISLAND** with a raised bar counter top that accommodated five stools.
4. **MIGRAED THE SINK TO A CORNER**, making traffic flow around the island. The bridge via along the wall to the right.
5. **LOCKED THE GAS COOKTOP** and dishwasher vent in the island, opposite two wall vents to set up work triangles.
6. **PLACED THE MICROWAVE** in the island to give the children easy access when they want a quick snack.
7. **MAINTAINED A MINIMUM CORRIDOR** of 36 inches (and a maximum of 45 inches) around the island to ensure comfortable circulation when the kitchen is full.

**BEFORE:** The two halves of the kitchen sat up to 10 feet from each other. The U-shaped work area was only marginally useful, and the eating area wasn't really large enough for a big family table.



ILLUSTRATION: JEFFREY H. HARRIS



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## KITCHEN DESIGN

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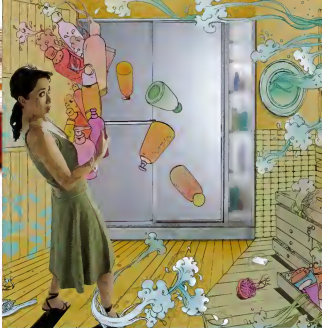
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## The Details

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- 2 | **LARGE CORNERS** decorated with grape clusters sit under the island granite counter-top, reflecting the traditional European style of the woodwork.
- 3 | **RATED PANELS AND BEADED EDGES** match the MidCentury style cabinet doors, using doors and drawers of varying sizes adds maximum visual interest. Grapes in baskets under the granite counter give the woodwork a handcrafted look.
- 4 | **CLASSIC CROWN MOLDING** tops the cabinets, which rise right up to the 8-foot ceiling. A display shelf for plates and bowls repeats the wood trim bordering the molding.
- 5 | **GLAZED-GLASS DOOR FRONTS** in the kitchen style enhance a corner display cabinet in the kitchen that is reserved for decorative and other glasses.



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## Art Tile

» One-of-a-kind craftsmanship that brings a dash of style to any house

BY NATALIE RODRIGUEZ  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MCCALL



THE BEAUTY of artisanal tile lies in its uniqueness. Because each piece is designed, molded, and glazed by hand, no two emerge from the kiln looking exactly alike. It's those subtle variations in line and color, as much as the rich images and striking textures, that make each of these ceramic creations so rare. Individual works of art, American craftsmen have been mixing up their masterpieces in mud for hundreds of years, and whether you choose a re-creation of a traditional design or a more contemporary motif, it's still made the old-fashioned way: ground into a glister mold, fired in an oven, hand-poured with colored slurs, and then baked up in. Comes a swirl on a bath wall, use them as an accent with plain subway tile, or mix a handful in with monochromatic squares to make your kitchen backsplash, bathroom walls, fireplace surrounds, even doorways spring newly to life.

### ARTS & CRAFTS ROBERT

Founded by artist ECR Gifford, Robert Arts and Crafts polychrome tiles are made using the Spanish ceramic process, at which individual glazes are poured by hand into the deep recesses formed by raised lines in the clay. From the Madonna-Girl's Eye Tile to the Left Bank Madonna-Foreverglaze Tile, \$25 to \$125 each. [robertarts.com](http://robertarts.com)



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#### 2. NATURAL WARMTH

The natural look of pine cones makes a fine tile for a beach house or coastal. Use the large decorative tile as a central accent tile border tile along the top and sides of the surround and the small squares or diamonds scattered in the field. \$15 to \$40. [www.birdie.com](http://www.birdie.com)

#### 3. FISHY BUSINESS

The murals, a common feature of early 20th-century shops and eateries, are just the thing for decorating a wall behind a bar or kitchen backsplash. The artwork is created using the same ceramic materials a tiny surface is applied to the tile making it perfectly fitted to fit hand with no grout. \$32 per tile. [mexicantiles.com](http://mexicantiles.com)

#### 4. REPAINTED

With their own hand-painted colors, not glossy surfaces, these historical framed tiles exuding a contemporary sensibility to a Craftsman style or a Spanish Revival style. \$14 each. [www.birdie.com](http://www.birdie.com)

For more on how to use the tiles in your home, go to [www.birdie.com](http://www.birdie.com)

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# 1 SHAPESAVINGOUTSUIT

For unique wall art, try a few decorative wood tiles. These designs are available at [www.mosaic.com](http://www.mosaic.com), created by Mosaic Mosaics for the Mosaic Mosaics & Tile Works, which operates out of a "wall-to-wall" museum." \$34.95 each, including shipping and handling. [www.mosaic.com](http://www.mosaic.com)

# 2 FOCAL POINT

This colorful, hand-painted mosaic tile is a great example of a focal point. It's available at [www.mosaic.com](http://www.mosaic.com), created by Mosaic Mosaics for the Mosaic Mosaics & Tile Works, which operates out of a "wall-to-wall" museum." \$34.95 each, including shipping and handling. [www.mosaic.com](http://www.mosaic.com)

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3. Schedule enough lead time. Generally, it takes four to six weeks to create any home window, door or tile.

4. Get samples. If you're having a hard time deciding, Pella's Designer Series windows and doors will create custom designs for you. Here are tips for getting started.

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BEHIND THE SCENES

FROM THE TON TV JOB SITE

## So You Think You Wanna Be on TV?

» Folks often ask what it takes to get their renovations on the This Old House TV show. Here's the inside scoop on what the producers look for in a project

BY ALEXANDRA BARNSON  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TRUHL

PAUL FREDERICK was a little startled when Tom Silva walked to his new home, a rambling suburban single-style ranch in mood of an update. It wasn't so much that the familiar *This Old House* general contractor had come by to check out the place. Paul had several fans, after all, along with the show's producers, so when he was slowly going the gravel time it was more that Tom started broadcasting a video camera. "He just started filming me talking about our plans for the house," says Paul. "Would I say a lot like an audience? Yeah, a little bit."

Tom's real intent was to document the home and get a record of the work to be done, but it was still a good sign. It meant Paul and his wife, Madeline Krauss, were in the running to be the next homeowners featured on *This Old House* TV. Just a couple of days earlier, they had e-mailed producer Deborah Flood their story, and now they had the whole production team in their Newton, Massachusetts, home. All told, it was just 72 hours from their e-mail push to getting the call that they'd been chosen to be on the show.

Swiss quick, even for television. But finding a house for TON TV to document the renovation was one of producer's tasks. By houseowner pick, and plenty old-growth (and). Twice a year, the producers review thousands of proposals sent by eager homeowners, while simultaneously contacting architects, real estate agents, and historical boards for likely candidates. They also put a call out on [thisoldhouse.com](http://thisoldhouse.com).

So what are they looking for? Well, the good ones are the owner changes with every



READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP

The new TON TV season 5 project, located in three-story Shingle-style in Newton, Massachusetts, owned by Paul Frederick and Madeline Krauss.



**BEHIND THE SCENES** Paul and Molly's house will make for great television because there's plenty of work to cover. The small master bedroom (1) will give a clear view to an old sleeping porch (2), soon to become a reading room and/or bath. The master bedroom (3) will give a clear view to an old sleeping porch (2), soon to become a reading room and/or bath. The master bedroom (3) will give a clear view to an old sleeping porch (2), soon to become a reading room and/or bath.



project. But there are some concerns. So if you're ever obsessed with getting the *Thru Old House* crew to show up at your doorstep, read on to find out what makes for a perfect project—and whether you might have what it takes.

**Location, location, location** The show's producers and contractors who do other jobs in addition to what you see on TV, and they all live near Boston. So one of the party project homes is located within commuting distance for all of them. Tom Silva is the actual general contractor, he doesn't jump on TV. He's away even when deciding, before he's off. (Have your doubts? Check out the 24-hour video on at [danielhouse.com](http://danielhouse.com).)

When the Boston-based project is finished, the crew has the road, doing a winter project that's usually covered with a tarp. To work in the off season, they need cold weather, which is a milder climate where construction goes full-time year-round—in the past they've looked at Santa Barbara,

Miami, Honolulu, and, most recently, Austin, Texas. But the show has overcome the cold in urban areas like Chicago and Washington and even London, England, too. Finally, if the story is compelling enough, the show travels to it.

**A house with some history** As a rule, *TOH* houses are old. But even 50 years old is enough to qualify for renovation. And that's not to say the producers wouldn't consider a newer house, if it would make for great TV.

More important than age is diversity of style. If the show recently featured a Federal-style house, the crew would probably be looking for something quite different, maybe a Queen Anne or a Craftsman. "We're really driven to change it up from what we did the year before," says Flood. The architecturally diverse interior of the Newton house is a complete turnaround from last year's project, the modest two-family in East Boston and Astor's green bungalow.

**Lots of stuff to do** The *Old House* is not a one-day make-over show. It documents an entire renovation in up to 26 episodes, shaping a narrative out of weeks of ongoing construction. "We're about quality and craftsmanship," says Flood. "These things take time—months, sometimes years."

The project has to be the product of what viewers at home might deal with in their own renovation, from planning to electrical to design. Work has to happen on exteriors, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms—pretty much everything. (Homeowners with such smaller projects can always try to get on *Ask The Old House*.) Though the Newton renovation will have much of the house intact, it will include a total kitchen remodel and a major front expansion. And one of the bigger projects will be an extensive landscape redo.

**A plan, a budget, and time** Homeowners trying to get on the show (see "May We Have Your Attention, Please?" page 88) should know what they want. A major reason that you need a new kitchen and would love a media room isn't as compelling as a description of your dream renovation,

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the blog

The staff has helped  
Bosch and  
Moby take on  
having 12 hours in  
their house, and even  
the occasional meal  
time at Bosch's house.

## May we have your attention, please?

303TV's producers reach out to press across the country during their project searches. But it's the homeowners, as well as their house, that help determine who makes the cut. Here's a look at some of producer Gershen's most favorite winning aspects.

**EXISTING 2006** How was attracted to the modest project, but what really caught her eye was the excellent personalities of owners Chris Flynn and Liz Hopley—and their sentimental pitch: "Purchasing the house with my

out, just fell right—we are able to keep it in the family and celebrate more special times with our loved ones," wrote Liz. "A person knows the world to see what the house needs, this comes from the heart." "I feel like this house has everything I've ever dreamed of and living in it is like a dream," wrote Chris, who she sent an appeal (most) from Hawaii. **AUTUMN 2006** Michele Gershen's e-mail to find out about plans she and Michael Kug had for her Craftsman was less emotional, but all the right points were there: "It was a small house, a historic neighborhood, a family who was committed to doing a green renovation," Hopley wrote. "I was a bit... I thought 'This is it!'" One take with Michele sealed the deal. **CAMERAS 2005** A Madison house—available! Here being the show's first choice. But Howard's George Hopley's pitch was "irrevocably well thought out." As he wrote: "In the 32 years since I bought the house, it's been tough figuring out what to do with it. Modern architecture was never my favorite, but I've come to accept that it is the only thing that feels born to be in the existing house and the land." And TCM agreed.

**LOTS TO LOOK AT** One plus for the Madison house was its exotic location. The open plan of the first floor (2) shows off original hardwoods, such as a carved mantel (3) that the owner had designed. The third floor boasts a billiard room (4) with 1920s pool table. Stained glass windows (5) throughout will be restored.

or better yet, architectural plans. Plans don't have to be lost. Cambridge architect Vail LaFollette had a solid design for Paul and Moby, but when TCM's master carpenter Norm Allen walked the new kitchen layout, he found out how far they'd come from the move to the porch door when they entered outside. So another door was added near the work area (former kitchen as "the main door").

Homeowners also have to be ready with the capital. As every TCM project owner knows, the show does not pay for the renovations. "You can't just be like, 'I'm so lucky!'" says Moby. "You

have to be financially ready to do a significant renovation." They need money to cover the cost of the show and have been known to discuss products or services, allowing homeowners to tackle a larger scope of work than they first considered. Just as long, it all has to be finished in the time frame—three months to a year—set by the show's production schedule. What Paul and Moby thought they'd do over seven years will now happen in just seven months.

**No fear of the spotlight** There's no way around it if you want to work with *The Old House*, you're going to be on camera. Chris Flynn has. The show is a documentary, recording a renovation through the experiences of the crew and the homeowners. It's not staged, and nobody's looking for actors. This is a reality TV in the true sense. The goal is to get everyone talking to each other as they do in real life.

"What we really liked when we first met everybody was how friendly they all were," says Paul. "We're so comfortable with them, and they're all meticulous and patient." That's just the kind of rapport that makes a project a good fit for everyone involved. ■

**TUNE IN** The new season of *The Old House* premieres on PBS in October. Go to [theoldhouse.com/tvchedule](http://theoldhouse.com/tvchedule) for your local listings.



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## AROUND MY HOUSE



## A Toolish Fella

» Does it really matter if our men hammers with a wrench?

BY JOHN KOSCIK ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEBBIE BLOCH



I HAVE NEVER BEEN A "TOOL GUY." I have bought tools, of course, but only with the confidence of a high school senior passing a course on lat/long/geom/dim. "That... that... that's a wrench!" Some guys are more worldly than me. Some guys love their tools with passion. I have a neighbor whose entire garage is a temple to tools. Table saws and drills and all sorts of impressive, furniture-use equipment, all waiting for him to come along and break out a bookshelf or a window seat or an ark.

My garage has two overflow canisters, five boxes with flat tires, and tons of bins filled with a lifetime of crap, most of it purchased from the local Sports Authority. I have a toolbox in the basement, but my garage has a roost of two tools so far as me and a ladder, which is the strict norm of the wood, probably not even a nail. I got the axe because I thought I might have a need to kill even when I moved to the suburbs. I never cut it because my neighbor has a chain saw. The ladder is 10 feet tall and made of wood and weighs roughly 750 pounds. Turns out, only electricians use wooden ladders, and even they have usually given them up for fiberglass ones. The rest of the world uses aluminum, which is very lightweight. I once asked my electrician if he wanted my wooden ladder, and he looked at me and said, "You know, they make those in aluminum..."

So one day, as I was in the garage with my car and my ladder, feeling ashamed and thinking I was lucky that my house was still standing given my lack of tool knowledge, I decided to head downstairs to poke around in my toolbox. What would my neighbors reveal if I knew I couldn't compete with my neighbors, but had a lifetime of rummaging through the tool world to get me any more useful tools? Well, I found...



#### 1/ TAPE

Tape is the tool that men who don't understand tools in other words, my dad. The other day, I needed a personal ventilation duct and he said of my dryer and he went through a whole lot of ductwork for the house, all with tape. It's like a duct tape. He said he had my dryer. He said he had the house come with scraps and screws, and then there was this thing that was supposed to go under the house and he said, "Yeah, okay, can you pass me that roll of tape?"

#### 2/ LEVELS

Levels are still. They must be, because I live in a house that is all different sizes. There's a plastic level that is 3 inches wide and 12 inches long. There's a wooden level that I thought at a yard sale that has the word "house" written on it, as if it might be a level of a house. I even have a pair of cut ladders that are like metal levels with bubbles and blue wood inside. I think I like the bubbles. The only thing I ever— and I know even—use a level for is hanging pictures. Why would I need 30 levels to hang pictures? It must be the bubbles.

#### 3/ FREE-ALLEN WRENCHES

Whenever I buy a piece of cheap, mass-produced furniture (I live in a universe where I, a person who works in a house, to help me assemble it, for some reason, I have decided that this is a great idea) when I buy a piece of furniture, I've got to get a new Allen wrench, but the manufacturer has previously provided me with a free Allen wrench that I can keep. And so I do. Of course when they are only giving me one, if you bought this piece of furniture you probably don't own any tools. I have every free Allen wrench I have ever gotten in a special section of my toolbox. It's the section marked FREE WRENCHES that is FREE TO USE.

#### 4/ OLD FASHIONED TOOLS

I have a wooden folding ruler. I guess I got that to watch my wooden ladder. Basically, they are made of lightweight metal rods of this ruler that fold up. No matter how long, wood just seems right. Until one day, my tool box that I've used in front of me, I have never actually used it. That is like something the Professor seemed to do on episode of *Gulliver's Island*. On a day, it would be better to pass off a room and guess that it would be to unfold and refold the room of the century old. So why do I keep



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it? Probably because I spent 30 bucks on it and it's kind of cool the way it folds. That's it.

#### 5/ A JAR OF SCREWS AND A JAR OF NAILS

I took me about five years to realize that I should separate the two. There is a jar that goes along with having a jar of screws and a jar of nails. But you realize that you need a screw in a nail for something. Then you get the jar and dump it out onto the table. Then you realize that this means all these screws and nails are in one jar as because they won't get lost for some reason, or else you would have said that and they wouldn't be here. Then you pick one that will hold it work but not too big, and you put it into whatever hole needs it. Wait two weeks, repeat.

#### 6/ DISCREETNESS

With each new tool purchase comes the possibility of success and the mystery of a skill that has always eluded me. Can I really get a piece of something that profound? Actually, I can. A very high price, it turns out. So when I needed a place to put a screwdriver, I decided I would cover the place. I needed the best one money could buy. I found a focus where everything in my house was placed to smooth and straight line. Closed doors and track windows would be made when they are sitting up my window (which I hadn't bought yet). Did I say one place? No, two or three more like it, and I would also need some. Most, I thought, I'd be able to find. I placed my first one, as it turns out, but not. Not only did I have to place very much, I also wasn't particularly good at it. I cleared off a shelf in my basement to display my impressive new plane collection.

There were other than in my toolbox, a bag of rubber bands, a very little rusty saw, some picture-hanging wire, three pins, a pencil, and a bag of nails. WD-40, and a quarter.

Where? In my bedroom, I keep a pair of pliers next to the air conditioner because the knobs broke last year and instead of getting a new knob, I was more pleased to get a new one. I was a tool to live next to the AC unit.

And in the end, those pliers really explain my relationship to tools better than the saw, the ladder, or the mailbox itself. Those pliers say to me I know exactly all I need to know about tools. In a pinch, I will use my saw to cut a piece of wood, especially if it's 10 feet long. The saws are used to hammer a nail with a wrench, that's why. Don't the nails go in? OK, then. One day, I may really need that strange little screw in the bottom of the jar to stop a leak or help save a man's life. You never know. For me, tools are mostly a means to an end. Sometimes they are useful, sometimes they are symbolic, sometimes they're beautiful, and sometimes tools just feel good in my hand.

But most times it's the bubbles. ■

*John Karpis is the creative director at 9to5 magazine.*

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**SALVAGE**



## Vintage Metal Doorknobs

» Use them to decorate doors, or creatively repurpose  
the hardware to give interiors a boost of classic style

BY AMY B. HUGHES  
WITH KATHY B. HUGHES

THE VINTAGE METAL MAN walked about the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America having no conference and auction in Portland, Oregon, you'd think the Gentle Dead had resurrected Jerry Garcia for a reunion concert. "You have to come," he said. "It'll be amazing."

I didn't go. Not because I don't love the history or the Reproduction, which makes new door hardware based on old designs, but because I had just made a pilgrimage to Discovery Antiques and Auctions in Gonzales, Texas, where one of the shop's co-owners, Rod Kisel, gave me a private viewing of his extraordinary doorknob collection. Plus, why bother when so much of the buying and selling of unique hardware happens online these days?

In 2013, for instance, a cast-bronze knob with the figure of an elk sold on an auction website for \$9,400, a record amount paid for a doorknob. The "standing elk" was made in 1876 by the Metallic Compression Casting Company, then the benchmark for quality in American hardware. What distinguishes the company's designs is the detail, Kisel told me as he handed me his prized Metallic Compression lion's-head knob. "Just look at the whiskers." Arrivers achieved such precision by hand pouring molten metal—brass, iron, or steel—into a sand mold, which they spun in a mechanical centrifuge until all the tiny voids were filled.

Rubber coverings by Metallic Compression and successors such as Russell & Erwin (which took over the company),

The period 1860 to 1920 in the Victorian era was the golden age of cast-bronze knobs, and iron knobs. After the turn of the century, manufacturers began producing hardware out of cheap tin and metal alloys





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## NKBA Resource Guide

This free, step-by-step resource has all the information you need to develop your project room, called client, establish a budget and choose a design professional. The workbook helps in discovering your taste and style, provides a variety of ideas and offers time management tips. National Kitchen and Bath Association. 800-843-6602 or [www.nkba.org](http://www.nkba.org).

## Event Spotlight

Check out these upcoming special events.

Green + Design Conference and Expo  
Hart Regency Hotel, Atlanta, GA  
October 12, 2007

Green + Design is the design industry's most comprehensive educational and trade-only event focusing on integrating the principles of sustainability into project design. For more information, please visit [www.greenanddesignexpo.com](http://www.greenanddesignexpo.com).

Prudence Heritage Craftsman Weekend  
19th Anniversary Celebration  
October 19-21, 2007

Immerse yourself in the American Arts & Crafts Movement! Weekend includes loans, exhibitions and lectures. Tickets go on sale August 23, 2007. Call 606-698-6033 to request a brochure or visit us online at [www.prcraftcenter.org](http://www.prcraftcenter.org).

USCBC Greenbuild Conference and Expo  
November 7-9, 2007

For all things green, head to Chicago for the U.S. Green Building Council's annual Greenbuild Conference and Expo. Tour the greenest pavilion in the exhibit hall to see the latest and greatest in green residential products and design. For more information, visit [www.greenbuildexpo.org](http://www.greenbuildexpo.org).

GREEN HOUSE

## Pop Quiz

» Think you know how to be a greener homeowner? Prove it by acing this 10-question test.

BY KEITH HANCOCK PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY SPEAR

1) Which U.S. president gave us "green buildings"?

A. Bill Clinton B. George H.W. Bush  
C. Jimmy Carter D. John F. Kennedy

**Answer:** C. Not only did our 39th president authorize panels on the White House (Ronald Reagan had done so once a few years later), his administration also ordered the government-sponsored mortgage finance company Federal Home Loan Mortgage (FHLM) to introduce Energy Efficient Mortgages (HEMs). Lenders who offer them, such as Wachovia and Countrywide, sign off on better loans if qualified homeowners agree to get the additional safety toward energy-saving products such as improved insulation, new basements, or upgraded windows.

**ATTENTION CLASS!** Each month in this issue, our Green House column gives you the information you need to become more consciously conscious homeowners. So in honor of back-to-school season, we figured now would be a good time to ask you to sharpen your sustainability green pencil and see just how far along you're going. (Hint: All the answers to the quiz have appeared in past issues of *This Old House*.) Turn the page for a key to your score and suggestions for extra credit reading. And remember: With each correct answer, you're one step closer to saving money, safeguarding your family's health, and preserving precious natural resources.

## The Financing You Need, The Guidance You Want

Get appliance discounts and green remodeling tips with Wells Fargo's New Home Improvement Program. It also gives you all the services and services to help with your projects, including member discounts and access to our exclusive home improvement website. Count on Wells Fargo to provide you with the financing you need and the guidance you want. Call 800-843-6602 or [www.wellsfargo.com/homeimprovement](http://www.wellsfargo.com/homeimprovement).

## The Next Stage®

SEPTEMBER 2007 [THISOLDHOUSE.COM](http://THISOLDHOUSE.COM) 65



2) Which of these does not contribute to bad indoor air quality?

- A. Air-conditioning B. Houseplants  
C. Shower curtains D. A plate of beef

**Answer: B** Studies show that common houseplants such as spider plants, philodendrons, peace lilies, and also ferns help neutralize indoor pollutants, including benzene from cleaning products, formaldehyde from plywood, and carbon monoxide from your gas range.

3) Which turf grass is native to the U.S.?

- A. Kentucky bluegrass B. St. Augustine  
C. Buffalo grass D. Red fescue

**Answer: C** Buffalo grass is native prairie grass known for being drought resistant, and since it's low-growing, it only needs to be mowed about once a month. Using native grasses is a good green choice, because they're easier to maintain than foreign lawn species, requiring less water, herbicide, and pesticide.

4) Americans go through 1 million tons of \_\_\_\_\_ each year.

- A. Food waste B. Toxic deodorant/deodorants  
C. Paper towels D. Discards for not cleaning the house

**Answer: C** Paper towels. A huge waste, most

not spicker prefer uppers are no and one product, meaning even if you buy recycled towels, they can't be recycled again. Instead, try washable, reusable microfibre towels.

5) Which is not a good nontoxic cleaner?

- A. Hot water B. Baking soda  
C. White wine D. Red wine

**Answer: D** But you tell any wetter, washing the stain in white wine can remove it. While you're making the penny, note that hot water cleans copper and baking soda cleans tile.

6) Which insect do you want in the garden?

- A. Praying mantis B. Ground beetle  
C. Sunshiner D. Earthworm

**Answer:** Trick question, you want all of them. Sunshiners love to pollinate our dandelions, rhododendrons, and marigolds. The praying mantis eats mosquitoes (though they also gobble beautiful insects and—good Lord!—each other). Ground beetles, which seek protection from the heat under rocks and low-growing plants, catch on slugs, caterpillars, and root maggot. And earthworms do a fine job of turning your lawn as they snack on decaying leaves.

7) Which of the following cannot be harmed by a pet's claws?

- A. Persian shells B. Sandstone  
C. Sintergrass D. Your wallet

**Answer: B** Aside from saving you money on your home heating bills, pet's claws open our doors by leaving other tell-tale signs of super-contaminated sneakers, cars, pet's shells, or, as in case, Daley's favorite coo, sintergrass.

## How'd You Do?

WHETHER YOU'VE DONE QUITE WELL OR NOT, HERE'S SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO BOOST YOUR GREEN CRED.

**SCORE: 8-10.** Looks like you're ready for a full-fledged green project. If you're remodeling, clearing up a copy of *Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time*, by David Johnston and Kim Korte. If you're building new, *Also Wilson's Your Green Home: A Guide to Planning a Healthy, Sustainable, and Friendly New Home* is a reader that can help you do it right.

**SCORE: 6-7.** Your green credentials only need a little bit of fixing. Get it from *Good*

*Green Homes*, by Jennifer Roberts, an excellent primer on how to live sustainably without affecting too much harm on the world outside your energy-efficient windows.

**SCORE: 5 OR BELOW.** Don't sweat it—but you need to read *The City Ethnographer* by Joel Derksen. Along with green building and design, Derksen also provides a helpful on how to choose the most sustainable furniture, linens, and—yes—coffee.

8) Which traditional building material is not inherently green?

- A. Terra-cotta B. Mosaic  
C. Limestone D. Flaxstone

**Answer:** They all are. Terra-cotta, made from water and fired clay, has been a green building material pretty much since people started building. Mosaic is a ground-up wood product with bound material using its own natural binders. Limestone is made of eco-friendly limestone. And Flaxstone (flaxseed), often used for soundproofing, is derived from recycled paper and is biodegradable.

9) Which material makes an excellent natural herbicide?

- A. Red pepper B. Corn glaze meal  
C. Good mud D. Jack Dandelion

**Answer: B.** Applied in the early spring, corn gluten meal prevents sprouting seeds from developing normal roots and can significantly reduce crabgrass, dandelions, and other weeds while leaving established plants alone.

10) What's the greenest countertop material?

- A. Granite B. Marble C. Engineered  
D. Concrete E. It depends

**Answer: E.** A lot of factors go into determining a product's green qualities, including how it was produced or harvested, the working conditions where it was made, how much fuel was used to transport it, and the amount of recycled or salvaged material it contains. That's the thing with green building. You gotta do some homework to get the right answer. ■

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## Way Beyond the Basics

» Let's face it: Bare-bones kitchens and baths are a bore. Here's a look at the newest, coolest products introduced at the annual Kitchen and Bath Show—smart-looking, high-performance appliances, fixtures, fittings, and finishes sure to refresh the dated spaces in any old house.

### Space Savers

Clear away the clutter with streamlined fixtures and hideaway storage.

#### 1 | INSTANT MAGNET CLOSET

Where to keep the Comet? Or maybe (best idea) your cleaning supplies in a Kallit/Mind/Catalyst's Magnetic 'n' Cleaning Supply Pull-out. Bins and bottles hang on its pull-out metal divider from \$1,600. [kallit.com](http://kallit.com)

#### 2 | CLEAR THE DECK

Not mounted faucets free up valuable space around the basin. Don't forget this streamlined MinkaCO permits polished-chrome spout with single-lever mixer \$688. [demibrace.com](http://demibrace.com)

#### 3 | FIELD-CUT FINISHING

Who wants to wrestle with the leveling board just to press out creases on a shirt for work? Ease the way with Aisle's pull-out leveling board with leveling plug \$350. Also available is a folding table and drying rack \$1,400 for use with Aisle's round counter and stools [www.aisle.com](http://www.aisle.com)

#### 4 | STOWAWAY COMPACT

Yes, it's practical. It's practical. Yes. Close the mood window of Villeroy & Boch's SmartBath, and the fully integrated wall-mount toilet, floorbowl, and built-in trash disappear from view leaving only a very handsome 2 by 4-foot patch-free which to find off here. \$1,800. [villeroy.com](http://villeroy.com)

#### 5 | UNDER-THE-BOOD STORAGE

We needed space. Soapy's Cache kept food life open to reveal room-persistent flat cutlery (50 pounds of kitchen paraphernalia). Available in 30, 36, and 48 inch widths. From \$1,288 to \$1,500. [soapyonline.com](http://soapyonline.com)



## Easy Upgrades

Put in a little do-it-yourself time to make hardworking areas more practical and polished

### 6 | RED-EMBROIDERED GARINET

Keep little ones clean by while you cook with RedZone's patented storage bins, slots and child-sized work surfaces you can incorporate into any kitchen. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$250; [www.redzone.com/kids](http://www.redzone.com/kids)

### 7 | ELEGANTLY PIONEERING

Decorate your kitchen and pull it in one of the easiest DIY ways in the book. With Mrs. Hemmings, a Dallas Place line of its affordable, hand-painted ceramic finished cabinet or painted ceramic sink, 18, 4, 6, and 8 inch pull, \$20 to \$30; [mrs.hemmings.com](http://mrs.hemmings.com)

### 8 | LIGHT BROWN YOUR MANTLE

Get ready for your next big thing. Singer's Columnar Series comes with a variety of photos, a full LED display, in all colors. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$200; [singer.com](http://singer.com)

### 9 | WATERPROOF BEAUBOARD

It's a handboard gets wet, so we'll be right. The Beauboard is a handboard for wet walling. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$200; [beauboard.com](http://beauboard.com)

### 10 | BAKESPLASH IN A FLASH

Keeping a polished wall behind the cooktop clean is a breeze. Just install a splashguard. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$200; [beauboard.com](http://beauboard.com)

### 11 | DIY FRIENDLY VANITY

Building a vanity is a breeze. Just install a splashguard. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. It's made of solid wood and is covered with a waterproof material. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$200; [beauboard.com](http://beauboard.com)

### 12 | ALL-IN ONE TABLET

Unclutter the kitchen table with a single-use pull-down faucet. Delta's All-in-One comes with an optional LED light. **Basic cabinet:** \$100 to \$200; [deltafaucet.com](http://deltafaucet.com)



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## Have It Your Way

It's your house. Customize it with products that let you tailor how you cook, cool, and clean.

## 1.9 | WORKING WITH NUMBERS

Your winegateshopper's most in front of the shaving mirror. Singer's Colours are adjustable vanity mirror can be set to any height that suits along its 24 inch long, well mounted bracket. **Rev. \$399. shop.singer.com**



## 34 | GET THE FRIDGE ROLL ROLL

To configure the wall you desire, think outside the box. The Flexible Triggers let you set a unit's match zone with 24-inch-wide boards that function as a refrigerator, a freezer, or a stacked combo freezer/wine cooler. Visit [E1600-LibberrysAppliances.com](http://E1600-LibberrysAppliances.com).



doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0141092.g002

Stinks with inflected exclamation like  
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## 5.1 HEAD-CLEARING HORN

Get a 5-foot east x 4-foot cook in the house? The authorized vent slopes of Mide's range hood retracts from a clearance of 30 inches to 40, in present heat-trapping no-must-for-her's swirling the stove. 3.3.2000 [www.3.3.2000.com](http://www.3.3.2000.com)



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Even tiny kitchens can get a pre-grade cooking center: Artisan's Espresso Line features a space-saver for plating heavenly chocolate soufflés (a 10-cup version and coffee-making drawer [not shown]—all 24 inches wide, Ours, \$1,999 each; warming drawer [799] available let us this fall. [www.appliances.us](http://www.appliances.us)



## 10 | SCHNITTSTÄBELWERTTABEL

As noted, that has good leverage for the occasional easier on the back. John Deere's plug-in Electric Ergonomic Grounds Workstation lets you adjust 16-strand handles (back surface) from 30 to 40 inches high with the push of a button. \$4,339 [johndeere.com](http://johndeere.com)



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## Earth-Conscious

Help save the environment, or simply celebrate it, with trendsetting products inspired by nature.

### 20 | HIDE TO THE TUBSIDE

Manual features update MFG Hand marks. Bathtubs and Wholesa 35lands collection which lets you coordinate colorful, beige, sandstone-toned tiles. Inset finishes, knobs and 3-inch pulls. \$224 to \$266, or \$249 to \$289. [mfghand.com](http://mfghand.com)

### 21 | LOW FLOW, HIGH STYLE

Maximize a standard toilet (1.6 gallons per flush) with one of TOTO's eco-units (1.28 gallons) and a family of four could save 7,000 gallons of water over the course of a year. But Nexus toilet. \$552 to \$654. [toto.com](http://toto.com)

### 22 | YOUR MINDSTYLE

Nature's most common motif in art: the spiral. Bath is a new line of tiles from graphic designers to new patterns added to ceramic. Ceramic Dragonfly, 8-inch square, ceramic tile. \$34 per square foot. And the Mountain Visions, 12-inch square. \$34 to \$38 per square foot. [ceramic.com](http://ceramic.com)

### 23 | SHARPLY BATH

Grass curves arrive at the kitchen via the Sharp. A 28-inch stainless steel sink with integrated cutting board. \$179. [sharp.com](http://sharp.com)

### 24 | SPINNY SAVING

Two water-thin standard spray nozzles flow water through Moen's Water Saving shower head at high pressure, so you don't have to be saving 2.5 gallons every three minutes in shower. Brushed nickel or oil rubbed bronze. \$32. [moen.com](http://moen.com)

### 25 | REFINED IN THE STONE

Unlike the terrazzo look of most solid surfacing that aims to replicate stone, this granite is a solid surface. Private Collection is a solid surface with a natural, irregular edge that suggests marble or limestone. \$45 per square foot. Includes color and edge. [solid.com](http://solid.com)

### 26 | HANDCRAFTED UNITY

Seaside Grace's custom solid cherry and walnut vanity and shower sink using Craftsman inspired assembly and open storage. Bath is a modern look. Vanity: \$2,500, sink: \$1,500. [seasidegrace.com](http://seasidegrace.com)



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## High-Tech

Problem-solving innovations aim to make everyday cooking and cleaning more efficient—and may be a little more fun.

### 26 | STELLAR SHOWERHEAD

Herman's pole-mounted shower head does both. Upright, its 9½-inch opening shaped head directs a gentle rain effect down. It swivels into a cascading shower. \$294 herman.com

### 27 | HUGO CENTER VIEW

Listen to CDs, watch a DVD as you cook, or have it be PBS for your favorite. This 200-watt stereo speaker set comes with the soundSonic rear head by Siemens. It has a 13-inch full-power LCD screen built in. For use with electric or induction cooktops only. \$1,499 siemens-haus.com

### 28 | TOWELS OUT CREASERS

A steam generator built to heat and signal 113 cubic-foot capacity dryer helps rid cotton shirts of wrinkles, odors, and static cling at the touch of a button. Pair it with LG's clothes washer in white, cherry, or stainless steel. From \$1,349 to \$2,499 lg.com

### 29 | TOUCH SLIDE COOK

Send your finger along the circular grooved control panel—just like the one on your Apple iPod—and set Siemens's slide conversion oven to heat, bake, broil, or grill. Perfect for any of 16 preprogrammed cooking modes. From \$2,999 siemens-haus.com

### 30 | BIG DREAM, BIG BANG

Like a luxury car, the smart ElectronicVERY front-loading washer is engineered for ultra quiet performance. Stainless steel belt bearings, shock-dampening effort, and stainless steel rollers with no additional bearings absorb vibration. Perfect if your laundry is upstairs or near the kitchen. And with 3.8 cubic feet of interior space, it can handle lots of big-size clothes. \$1,299-\$1,399 kenmore.com

### 31 | SAVORING CYCLES

Siemens' ultra-quiet dishwasher heats 180° F, dries 60 minutes, and seals the door with a 20-minute hot-dry cycle. Starting at \$1,099 herman.com



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## Traditional

Classic silhouettes are making a comeback in fresh colors, finishes, and styles.

### 32 | GLIDER AND CRIPPLE

Classic white fixtures combine a place to bathe, but the price tag is sometimes a sticker shock. And it's a new suite of high-end bath fixtures from Delta. Includes this rectangular 28-by-20-inch pedestal sink—perfect for vintage-style bath. \$860;delta.com

32-



33-



### 33 | STONE WITH A GLIM

Turned marble is a favorite for its earthy appeal. Stone Impressions has added stone-textured marble to its line of finished and uncoated tiles for a sophisticated choice. In various sizes, from 6-inch mosaic to 4-by-12-inch slabs. \$33 to \$38 per square foot. stoneimpressions.com

### 34 | EDWARDIAN ELEGANCE

A carry-over nickel tub filler is not hand-chained with porcelain handles lends period authenticity to a soaking tub. By Delta. \$1,760; delta.com

### 35 | HYDRO FRIDGE

Deep enough to hold that extra TP roll, Nature's Hydration Studio's most chic collection of modern design can be recessed into a standard 4-inch wall cavity. Slim mirrored shelves can enhance the property value. From \$295 to \$445, unrefrigerated, \$445 to \$770, nature.com

### 36 | FIFTY-STYLE FRIDGE

Red's curves and bold color help the 55-inch tall SoftCool refrigerator take a whole variety of bathrooms, especially small ones. Its footprint is less than 24 by 28 inches. In 30 colors. \$1,999; softcool.com for details

36-



### 37 | KIDS-AND-ADULTS POT FILLER

A pot filler that mounts conveniently into the cabinet lets you avoid leaning over and is an extra plumbing. One of Delta's Platinum line features all-rolled brass, brushed nickel, chrome, and chrome. \$549; delta.com

### 38 | A GEM OF A FAUCET

Add some sparkle to the powder room. Delta's Remington faucet has a simple, elegant appeal. Backed by Delta's Diamond-Crystal handles. \$170;delta.com

32-



35-



37-

38-

PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE/ISTOCK



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## Simply Sleek

Clean design right at home in the kitchen and bath, where form naturally follows function.

### 39 | ALL-IN-ONE WASHERS

A previous leader in handy bar-style ing pots and pans, JGC's One-Wall The First a rather compact undermount sink that's also a place to work and comes attached to a sleek Mo-chien sprout that swings out of the way; all controlled by the sleekest of levers. \$295, [www.jgc.com](http://www.jgc.com)

### 40 | PUNCH-DOWN POLISH

Unfussy headless pulls with a wide range of finishes and bath. A sleeker look, we like the sleeker contemporary style. Total ring: \$85 colored knob \$85 color pull \$100 pull \$125, call phone 800-848-8484

### 41 | SHOWER SOLUTION

With its ability to be molded seamlessly into the wall, making it a perfect choice for bathroom design. A sleeker look, we like the sleeker contemporary style. Total ring: \$85 colored knob \$85 color pull \$100 pull \$125, call phone 800-848-8484

### 42 | UNTRADITIONAL TOUCH

An update on the old-timey chrome sink. A sleeker look, we like the sleeker contemporary style. Total ring: \$85 colored knob \$85 color pull \$100 pull \$125, call phone 800-848-8484

### 43 | TILE CLIMB THE WALLS

The 40-degree shower wall. A sleeker look, we like the sleeker contemporary style. Total ring: \$85 colored knob \$85 color pull \$100 pull \$125, call phone 800-848-8484

### 44 | STEAM-BATHING FACTORY

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### 45 | SCULPTURAL SINK

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\*Measured by a breathing test in people taking ADVAIR 250/50 compared with people taking other corticosteroid propionate 250 mcg or salmeterol 50 mcg. Maximum effects may take several weeks. Your results may vary.

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## Matching New Boards to the Old

When this porch deck was laid, boards of clear, quarter-sawn Douglas fir were readily available. These days, the same wood can still be had (though at a much dearer price), but the standard milling dimensions now are 2x4, 2x6, 2x8 in. by 3/4 in. or 5/8 in., 3x4x6, and 5x6x8 (3 in. by 3/4 in. or 5/8 in.). An expert mill carpenter can mill the new boards down to size on a table saw or you can do it yourself following the steps outlined in *DIY Building*, p. 131.



## Why Fir?

Vertical-grain Douglas fir is widely used for porch decking because it's fairly rot- and dent-resistant, easy to work, and stable, so it holds paint well.

### REMOVAL

**1) CUT THE FIRST BOARD.** You will need to saw through one board lengthwise to remove it and any damaged neighbors. To keep from cutting the deck joists, set the depth of the saw blade by resting its shoe on the edge of the deck and lowering the blade until it's even with the board's bottom face (front). Make the cut in a damaged board that's next to a good one and whose groove faces the other boards that will be replaced. (You can spot the tongues and grooves at the ends of the decking along the front edge of the porch.) Starting at the porch edge, run the saw down the center of the damaged board to avoid hitting nails. Stop when you reach the house wall. Remove the saw and drive a 3/4-inch-diameter chisel into the kerf to split the final few inches.

**2) PRY UP THE OLD DECKING.** Using a pry bar and hammer, remove the old wood on both sides of the cut, being careful not to harm the tongue of the undamaged deck board. Once the waste is clear, drive the bar upward and below the old and the underside of the next damaged board and pry it up. Start at the edge of the porch and work toward the house until the board pops loose. If necessary, chisel out the end nearest the house and pull any nails left in the framing. Repeat these steps on the remaining damaged boards. Then scrape clean the exposed tongue-and-grooves of the old boards with a 5-in. flat.



You've laid the porch floor, now it's time to lay up the railing and balusters. Visit [thisoldhouse.com/diy/howto](http://thisoldhouse.com/diy/howto).

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TIP

If the new deck boards have tongues and grooves larger than those on the old boards, place a strip of sand in each joint to fit the new boards up to the right height.



BUILD YOUR SKILL

Learn how to use tongue and groove flooring. [Watch this](#) ▶



#### REPLACEMENT

**3 | INSTALL THE NEW DECKING.** Prime all the boards' edges and lower faces with fast-drying oil-based primer to protect them from moisture. Soak in a bowl of polyurethane construction adhesive an all the exposed joints, then place the groove of a replacement board over the tongue of an old deck board and press the new piece into the adhesive. Secure against an angle (a sturdy 2x4 or 2x6) using a screwdriver and a nail through the tongue of the new board and into each joint. Repeat the naildriving with a nailset and hammer. Continue installing the new decking until you're ready to put in the last piece.

**4 | TRIM THE LAST BOARD.** The last replacement piece can't be fastened, so mark the location of each joint on the faces of the neighboring boards. Then cut off the bottom edge of the last board's groove so it can rest on top of the last exposed tongue. To do this, adjust the table saw's blade depth and fence position so that sliver of wood will be ripped off in one pass as you slide the tongue along the fence.

**5 | INSTALL THE LAST PIECE.** Fit the trim piece and slide its tongue all the way into the groove of the old decking. Gently tap the groove side into place until it rests on top of the adjacent tongue. Drive the siding nails vertically down through the face of the new piece and in line with the joint location marks. Pound the heads below the wood surface with a mallet and fill with putty.

**6 | SAND THE PATCH FLARE.** Using 60-grit paper, run a belt sander diagonally across the new boards and they're nearly flush with the old ones. Then switch to a medium-grit sander with 100-grit paper and smooth away the belt sander scratches. Wipe up the sand dust, wipe the wood with a tack cloth and finish with a matching oil-based deck paint.



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TOOLBOX



## Reinventing the Rake

Smart new designs and features help you make quick work of leaves, clods, and rocks

BY HARRY SAWYERS PHOTOGRAPHS BY JON CHRISTIAN

### ADVERTISE

The short time on this 17½" garden leaf rake earned for 12 inches wide (laterally for yard-wide coverage) or narrow (down to 2 inches (2x)) for reaching 18½" out of the shrubbery to the edge of the lawn. It's a 12½" wide rake.

THERE ARE MANY TYPES of rakes in these gardens to make up. You've got flexible leaves and leaf rakes for raking the big maple down North and the pile of pine straw down South. Self-raked garden rakes for clearing clods of dirt and grading (upward) and a leaf and easily the most or red. Do the heavy rakes for sweeping (upward) layers of dead grass from the healthy turf beneath. The last grass on (and out). That's because new rakes on rakes must to appear every autumn, when so helpful (most) leaves make beds that money does or last grow to make. To make your choice (and we're sorry) out the bottom from the bag and give you a few words (and we're sorry) that do make a difference in your garden shed.



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## Building a Fire Pit

BY HARRY SAWYER PHOTOGRAPHS BY KOLIN SMITH

OUTDOOR FIRING AREAS ARE HOT RIGHT NOW. Seriously. Married for called the house for a reason, it's true, but those days people are going into homes and getting their best fire stone wall to go set into the earth. And why not? On cool summer nights, you can roast marshmallows and sizzle steaks while you lounge in an Adirondack chair, feet propped up on the rock ledge. In the fall, you can stay warm by the hearth with the flames at your back. And when guests gather around the gas fire stove, you'll literally be able to roast chestnuts over an open fire.

So if you really want to build up right, do it in style. Take a few days to build your very own ring of fire. At This Old House, technical editor Mark Powers shows us in the following pages, the assembly isn't any harder than playing with blocks. Then, once the hearth piece is in place, your stone pit will be the rock of your yard.

**COST:**  
About \$400

**TIME:**  
2 full days

**DIFFICULTY:**  
2010-2011-2012-2013-2014-2015-2016-2017-2018-2019-2020-2021-2022-2023-2024-2025-2026-2027-2028-2029-2030-2031-2032-2033-2034-2035-2036-2037-2038-2039-2040-2041-2042-2043-2044-2045-2046-2047-2048-2049-2050-2051-2052-2053-2054-2055-2056-2057-2058-2059-2060-2061-2062-2063-2064-2065-2066-2067-2068-2069-2070-2071-2072-2073-2074-2075-2076-2077-2078-2079-2080-2081-2082-2083-2084-2085-2086-2087-2088-2089-2090-2091-2092-2093-2094-2095-2096-2097-2098-2099-2100-2101-2102-2103-2104-2105-2106-2107-2108-2109-2110-2111-2112-2113-2114-2115-2116-2117-2118-2119-2120-2121-2122-2123-2124-2125-2126-2127-2128-2129-2130-2131-2132-2133-2134-2135-2136-2137-2138-2139-2140-2141-2142-2143-2144-2145-2146-2147-2148-2149-2150-2151-2152-2153-2154-2155-2156-2157-2158-2159-2160-2161-2162-2163-2164-2165-2166-2167-2168-2169-2170-2171-2172-2173-2174-2175-2176-2177-2178-2179-2180-2181-2182-2183-2184-2185-2186-2187-2188-2189-2190-2191-2192-2193-2194-2195-2196-2197-2198-2199-2200-2201-2202-2203-2204-2205-2206-2207-2208-2209-2210-2211-2212-2213-2214-2215-2216-2217-2218-2219-2220-2221-2222-2223-2224-2225-2226-2227-2228-2229-2230-2231-2232-2233-2234-2235-2236-2237-2238-2239-2240-2241-2242-2243-2244-2245-2246-2247-2248-2249-2250-2251-2252-2253-2254-2255-2256-2257-2258-2259-2260-2261-2262-2263-2264-2265-2266-2267-2268-2269-2270-2271-2272-2273-2274-2275-2276-2277-2278-2279-2280-2281-2282-2283-2284-2285-2286-2287-2288-2289-2290-2291-2292-2293-2294-2295-2296-2297-2298-2299-2300-2301-2302-2303-2304-2305-2306-2307-2308-2309-2310-2311-2312-2313-2314-2315-2316-2317-2318-2319-2320-2321-2322-2323-2324-2325-2326-2327-2328-2329-2330-2331-2332-2333-2334-2335-2336-2337-2338-2339-2340-2341-2342-2343-2344-2345-2346-2347-2348-2349-2350-2351-2352-2353-2354-2355-2356-2357-2358-2359-2360-2361-2362-2363-2364-2365-2366-2367-2368-2369-2370-2371-2372-2373-2374-2375-2376-2377-2378-2379-2380-2381-2382-2383-2384-2385-2386-2387-2388-2389-2390-2391-2392-2393-2394-2395-2396-2397-2398-2399-2400-2401-2402-2403-2404-2405-2406-2407-2408-2409-2410-2411-2412-2413-2414-2415-2416-2417-2418-2419-2420-2421-2422-2423-2424-2425-2426-2427-2428-2429-2430-2431-2432-2433-2434-2435-2436-2437-2438-2439-2440-2441-2442-2443-2444-2445-2446-2447-2448-2449-2450-2451-2452-2453-2454-2455-2456-2457-2458-2459-2460-2461-2462-2463-2464-2465-2466-2467-2468-2469-2470-2471-2472-2473-2474-2475-2476-2477-2478-2479-2480-2481-2482-2483-2484-2485-2486-2487-2488-2489-2490-2491-2492-2493-2494-2495-2496-2497-2498-2499-2500-2501-2502-2503-2504-2505-2506-2507-2508-2509-2510-2511-2512-2513-2514-2515-2516-2517-2518-2519-2520-2521-2522-2523-2524-2525-2526-2527-2528-2529-2530-2531-2532-2533-2534-2535-2536-2537-2538-2539-2540-2541-2542-2543-2544-2545-2546-2547-2548-2549-2550-2551-2552-2553-2554-2555-2556-2557-2558-2559-2560-2561-2562-2563-2564-2565-2566-2567-2568-2569-2570-2571-2572-2573-2574-2575-2576-2577-2578-2579-2580-2581-2582-2583-2584-2585-2586-2587-2588-2589-2590-2591-2592-2593-2594-2595-2596-2597-2598-2599-2600-2601-2602-2603-2604-2605-2606-2607-2608-2609-2610-2611-2612-2613-2614-2615-2616-2617-2618-2619-2620-2621-2622-2623-2624-2625-2626-2627-2628-2629-2630-2631-2632-2633-2634-2635-2636-2637-2638-2639-2640-2641-2642-2643-2644-2645-2646-2647-2648-2649-2650-2651-2652-2653-2654-2655-2656-2657-2658-2659-2660-2661-2662-2663-2664-2665-2666-2667-2668-2669-2670-2671-2672-2673-2674-2675-2676-2677-2678-2679-2680-2681-2682-2683-2684-2685-2686-2687-2688-2689-2690-2691-2692-2693-2694-2695-2696-2697-2698-2699-2700-2701-2702-2703-2704-2705-2706-2707-2708-2709-2710-2711-2712-2713-2714-2715-2716-2717-2718-2719-2720-2721-2722-2723-2724-2725-2726-2727-2728-2729-2730-2731-2732-2733-2734-2735-2736-2737-2738-2739-2740-2741-2742-2743-2744-2745-2746-2747-2748-2749-2750-2751-2752-2753-2754-2755-2756-2757-2758-2759-2760-2761-2762-2763-2764-2765-2766-2767-2768-2769-2770-2771-2772-2773-2774-2775-2776-2777-2778-2779-2780-2781-2782-2783-2784-2785-2786-2787-2788-2789-2790-2791-2792-2793-2794-2795-2796-2797-2798-2799-2800-2801-2802-2803-2804-2805-2806-2807-2808-2809-2810-2811-2812-2813-2814-2815-2816-2817-2818-2819-2820-2821-2822-2823-2824-2825-2826-2827-2828-2829-2830-2831-2832-2833-2834-2835-2836-2837-2838-2839-2840-2841-2842-2843-2844-2845-2846-2847-2848-2849-2850-2851-2852-2853-2854-2855-2856-2857-2858-2859-2860-2861-2862-2863-2864-2865-2866-2867-2868-2869-2870-2871-2872-2873-2874-2875-2876-2877-2878-2879-2880-2881-2882-2883-2884-2885-2886-2887-2888-2889-2890-2891-2892-2893-2894-2895-2896-2897-2898-2899-2900-2901-2902-2903-2904-2905-2906-2907-2908-2909-2910-2911-2912-2913-2914-2915-2916-2917-2918-2919-2920-2921-2922-2923-2924-2925-2926-2927-2928-2929-2930-2931-2932-2933-2934-2935-2936-2937-2938-2939-2940-2941-2942-2943-2944-2945-2946-2947-2948-2949-2950-2951-2952-2953-2954-2955-2956-2957-2958-2959-2960-2961-2962-2963-2964-2965-2966-2967-2968-2969-2970-2971-2972-2973-2974-2975-2976-2977-2978-2979-2980-2981-2982-2983-2984-2985-2986-2987-2988-2989-2990-2991-2992-2993-2994-2995-2996-2997-2998-2999-3000-3001-3002-3003-3004-3005-3006-3007-3008-3009-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# 4

## 4 Lay and level the first course

Place the first block in the ring. Using a 2-foot level, check that it sits level (both side to side and front to back). Where the block is level, lay it down with a rubber mallet. Where it is a few shims off slightly with a handful of pine shims. Make sure the first block is perfectly level and positioned correctly so the bricks look amazing.

Lay another block next to the first one. But the sides together tightly and line up the front and back edges. Using the first block as a guide, level the second block side to side and front to back. Lay the rest of the blocks in the trench in the manner until the ring is complete and all the blocks you transferred are used. Make sure each block is perfectly leveled and lined up tight with its neighbor (LEFT) before moving on to the next one. (You may have to coax the last block into place with a mallet.) Using a 4-foot level, occasionally check level across the ring.

A mallet with a rubber sole can make a big adjustment, work slowly and carefully, brick by brick.

TIP >



## Assemble the walls

Using a mallet, gently secure a strap band of masonry adhesive across two adjacent bricks. Lay a block on top of the glue-covered bricks, centering it over the seam between them (RIGHT). Make sure any overhanging parts on the blocks fit together well. Continue until the second course is finished.

Fill the pit with 4 inches of gravel (RIGHT), which will help support the first few courses as they settle up. Glue and lay the third and fourth courses, continuing to stagger the joints. Insert the iron campfire ring into the circle. Adjust it to sit even with the top of the block wall. Fill any space between the ring and the block wall to the top with gravel.

Work quickly and only lay a small area at one time. Masonry adhesive sets up fast.

TIP >



# 5

## 5 Cap the blocks

Literally arrange the cap stones on top of the pit walls. If you are using natural stone, try to arrange the pieces together like a puzzle. Lay concrete-edge-over-threshold and work the upper stone where they meet. Also roughly work the stone for a 2-inch overhang on the outside of the circle wall and on the inside. Using a brick hammer and a chisel, score the stone on these marks. On thick natural stone, use a grinder fitted with a diamond blade to score it more deeply.

Lay the stone on a hard surface. Split it by tapping a chisel in the score mark or by tapping against the stone edge with the brick hammer until it breaks. Score and split each stone this way, moving around the circle in one direction only. You've made a cap that fits together tightly.

If you're using blocks, glue the stones on top of the wall. If you're using natural stone, combine the dry mortar with enough bonding additive—no water—to make a mix with a peanut butter consistency. Wet the wall with water, bonding agent. Lay a layer around all mortar on two blocks. With the point of the trowel, make a groove across the mortar. Lay the cap stone on top (LEFT), push it down, then tap it with the rubber mallet (right) and level it. Continue to lay the capstones in this manner until the wall is finished. Wet the top before lighting a fire.



# buying guide

A fire pit can be more than just a lamp of burning logs if you include looks that let you roast, warm, cook, and even put on a sparkling show. Here are a few of our favorite must-have accessories designed to turn a place pit into a party paradise.

## SAFETY NET

A screen above the pit stops sparks from flying out and effectively screens out anyone who leans too close to the flames. This outdoor screen has hanging doors, the company also stocks standard sizes from \$60 (\$500 for screen shown), [dancingfire.biz](http://dancingfire.biz)



## SPRINKLE ORILL

The Fire Chef's 10-by-24-inch grill sits below a rotating steel spit that fits over whole chickens. The height adjusts to vary cooking temperatures, and comes with other side-fuel pits and tools, \$55, [www.dancing.com](http://www.dancing.com)



## POT (JUST) RIGHT

A good campfire roasts steaks—more precisely works best. Cook 4 to 6 ribs or roast 10 marshmallows using the Super Digger and the Marshmallow Fry. Or just fire up the traditional popcorn popper with kernels and oil and start the ghost stories. Super Digger, \$6; Marshmallow Fry, \$10; popcorn popper, \$11; [dancing.com](http://dancing.com)



## BUTTERFAKE TRAYS

Keep a galvanized tin bucket filled with sand by the fire for a quick lights-out. Add a pair of fireproof gloves to your safety arsenal to ease you need to reach infected coals. Bucket, \$10; fireproof gloves, \$40; [fireproof.com](http://fireproof.com)



## STARRY NIGHT

When the flames die down, the green a light show with decorative glass—place some tea rock on the embers. Top that with a mesh screen. Then blow us out of more than 200 shiny glass spheres for a glistening fire. Lava rock, \$40 for 50 pounds; screen, \$100; glass, 5 mm \$4 per pound, 10 mm \$6 per pound, [thebestofplace.com](http://thebestofplace.com)



## EDGE FINISH

This red granite holds decorative rocks above the ground so with another's cast iron. Comes available in various heights and diameters, from \$250, [dancingfire.biz](http://dancingfire.biz)



Featured by [dancingfire.biz](http://dancingfire.biz) the top most requested projects at [thebestofplace.com](http://thebestofplace.com)



Attractive island work in the 20- or 22-foot kitchen, once small as living area at the old Federal Bank, Kentucky post office (left) and the P.O. (right). The room is now a kitchen and dining area. The first large kitchen was a first-class kitchen.



## first class

How a Kentucky homeowner put her personal stamp on a dusty 1930s post office and turned it into a luxurious, comfortable place to live

SURE, IT'S A FINE PLACE TO VISIT, but who—aside from maybe the eccentric postmistress in Indiana Wiley's classic yarn "Why I Live in the P.O."—would seriously consider making a former government building her private sanctuary? Well, Sarah Belcher, M.D., for one. And that's an eccentric. She is, quite to the contrary, a family physician, a student of history, an avid collector of Americana, and a graceful, rounded center of Friesenville, Kentucky.

That her current address—struck in the middle of Friesenville's sleepy downtown (household name)—happens to have served the local population (around 5,000 or so, these days) as the U.S. Post Office for 70 years is a circumstance based on some clear-minded financial and lifestyle choices and more than a little determination. Ten years ago, having completed her residency in Lexington, the 34-year-old 120 miles away, the young physician moved back to the former coal-mining town nestled in the Appalachian foothills (about 10 miles from Lexington and 100 miles from the Kentucky state capital) with the goal of buying a house of her own in the town she had called home her whole life. But not just any house. It had to be a house with character.

by Joseph DiGirolamo  
photographs by  
attached to the  
postcard by  
the postcard by  
the postcard by



ABOVE: A new freestone fireplace took the place of the PO's original stone chimney, becoming the focal point of the current grand room, an informal living area. The iron grille designed to partition the lobby from office was moved to place, allowing for a night that streamlines the original building, a original wooden addition to provide for a complete living room. (PHOTO: FRANK) A new coat closet transformed in each area near the original stone into a new, very lively. The decorative molding was found and used in the building, shipped, repaired, and installed at this, the pedestal table was salvaged from the lobby. The living treatment hides simplicity and grace.

A house with a sense of local history. And a house with plenty of space to devote to her cherished collections, which range from Victorian, vintage series, and enamel typewriters to vintage silver, period furniture, and Nancy Drew books (she has always loved a mystery!).

"Her father offered to build her a house," Sarah's mother, Laura Bellman, recalls. "No, she didn't want a new house. So we suggested that what we would call a modest stone house. No, she didn't want a small house. She wanted a big old house." But that was proving hard to find.

In this part of Kentucky, meeting family friends was rarely come to market, and to be passed down from one generation to the next. And she didn't like the look of new houses. "I didn't want to live in a tiny village," Sarah says.

Her father, Frank, a country doctor who still makes house calls in his pickup, and mother, who ended up serving in her daughter's general store, are practical-minded people, but they respect their daughter's dream, and when Sarah announced her plan to buy Frank's 1931 post office from the government and convert it into a home, they were the first to step up and offer helpful advice. "Dr. Frank"—beginning with the sort of common sense that grows from having a child's dream of renovation projects through the years—





## from post office to PRIVATE HOME

The successful conversion of this former public building depended on homeowner Sarah Bolander's ability to establish legal fees in the structure's potentially unworkable layout. "I had the place built out in my initial 12 minutes after I walked in the door," she says. **RIGHT >>** On the first floor, the lobby was turned into a formal living room where guests are greeted and entertained. The postmaster's office became a home office; the money order

office became a formal dining room, and its safe now serves as the kitchen's built-in pantry. The second floor was divided to create a new bathroom, a grand room and reconfigured master bedroom, a main staircase, a new library, a garden room and a glass-enclosed bathroom adjacent to the service stairs leading down.



First Floor

COURTESY, BOLANDER

so his youngest child and only daughter down and shared his mother place for the system. "He told me I should fix up a little place upstairs for myself and not use the rest as a commercial space," recalls Sarah. But, of course, that wasn't exactly what she had in mind.

For now, though, the sturdy brick post-office building was already filled with family memories. Sarah remembered visiting the PO as a little girl. She swung like a monkey from the tall wooden tables in the lobby as her mother stamped telegrams. As the only family-owned building in town, the Colonial Revival-style structure also housed each government office in the Internal Revenue Service and the Selective Service. "One of my aunts told me, 'I spent the worst day of my life in that IRS office, being audited,'" says Sarah. And one of her uncles, recently recruited from the Korean War, gave the grandson at the desk office a piece of his mind when they used to call him in duty a second time.

With an all-brick exterior, its thick concrete exterior walls,

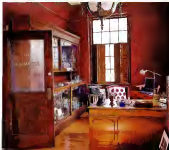
and as underlying steel skeleton, the old structure was, and still is, solid as a rock. When Sarah was a student at the elementary school down the block, children were sent over to bunker down in the basement of Postville's PO in the event of an airborne attack. "The building was the local bomb shelter. It was built to take a direct hit," she says.

Inside, though, the building Sarah purchased for \$162,000 was dark and dank. Many of the rooms were painted top to bottom in post-office blue. Hideous linoleum or tough rubber padding was glued to most of the worn floors. But the PO seemed enough of a respectable period detail—including terra-cotta floor tiles, marble baseboards, and ginkgo-paneled walls—that Sarah was convinced to take the rehab project on.

Today, she and her husband, Clyde Woods II (a former professional wrestler and Kentucky native whom Sarah married after the renovation was complete), make their home at third-floor Postville PO, which now accommodates a spacious master bedroom suite, four spectacular bathrooms, and a double fireplace that serves as a living

wood-trimmed front parlor with a less formal great room. The heart of their home, located in the old mail-sorting area, is a 20-by-20-foot kitchen with a granite range, black granite and butcher-block countertops, and 12-foot-high cabinets with built-in sliding ladders.

Beyond the main, the greater success depended on the new owner's ability to establish a logical traffic pattern and space within the existing commercial pulse. She accomplished the job with her wood



**OPPOSITE PAGE.** Bolander's floor-to-ceiling custom cabinets give the garden suite a vintage look with built-in glass-fronted cherry cabinets. More cherry built-ins maximize kitchen storage without blocking the sunlight. Built-in vaults through the old lobby lobby. The owner claims the old postmaster's office as her best keeping. It's a small, polished glass box.

## adapting and reusing OLD BUILDINGS

Most people see decommissioned post offices, school buildings, and firehouses as quaint relics of days gone by. Others envision the old structures as spacious places to call home. Rehabbing a quirky non-residential structure isn't quite the same as remodeling an old house. Here are some factors to weigh before you decide to convert an old building for private use.

### >>> How do you like the location?

The building itself may be a gem, but if the adjoining property is a pigsty or a Superfund site, think twice about calling the place home. If you possess the planning permit, you might go ahead and invest your time and dollars in a neighborhood renovation. Or you might consider giving the building to an alternate site.

### >>> What conditions is the place in?

And how much will it cost to make the home you imagine a reality? The only smart way to address these questions is to work closely with a designer or architect from the get-go and develop a master plan that you and all contractors will follow from day one. If you try to design as you go, you may be forced to undo previous work.

### >>> What are the hidden costs?

Big old buildings often tell for a host of reasons. It costs to make them habitable. Even after factoring in the costs of the transformation from commercial to residential use, monthly upkeep

can eat away at your budget. You know lowering the ceiling will hide the rafters, beams that made you fall in love with the place—but closing off the rafters will also lower your energy consumption.

### >>> What materials can be saved?

Not all building materials withstand the test of time. Insulated brick, iron and steel tend to survive better than wood, which is highly susceptible to water damage and wood-destroying insects. It's essential that the elements that give a place its character remain capable of providing proper structural support and services. Inspect everything from the roof and beams to the plumbing fixtures and brackets before you buy.

### >>> Can you preserve the building's character?

Clearly you don't want to do a gut rehab that wipes away all traces of the building's prior life. To strike a balance between old and new, keep interesting and sleek details that convey the spirit of the old structure and old systems and materials that make it breathe new

life. Be true to the building, much to the dismay. She made the best of the loss, making that custom wood so lovely and a double fireplace would make a grander—and much more functional—divider between the two living spaces.

On one side of those stairs, the former lobby would serve as an entry porch and formal living area. On the other side, the converted mail-sorting room would be converted into a room housing the family great room and a new kitchen and butler's pantry. Between the two, the old money-order office would serve as dining room, to walk in style, still working, could be outfitted with cherry cabinets to hold her silver collection.

Belhusen worked with Quality Custom Cabinetry in New Holland, Pennsylvania, to create a kitchen that could fit her large extended family as well as her teenagers. She called on Michael Reber, a Minnesota ex-cabinet maker from West Liberty, Kentucky, to construct all the rest of the woodwork. Reber patiently drew sketches for his client, hoping to let her know, once, and an overall design the world was in. In this way, areas and homeowners collaborated on winning designs, including all woodwork, display cabinets, moldings, and a bookshelf. I used library models after Henry Higgins' success in the 1944 Warner Bros. musical *My Fair Lady*.

Meanwhile, Belhusen's army of handy relatives worked demolition, scraping off faded blue paint, lifting drop-top flooring, and blow-torching old blown glass. Along the way, they found scraps of undelivered mail and a stack of shilling anti-farm Cold War-era "safety notification postcards," which people fleeing as a rat were supposed to send to inform loved ones of their whereabouts. These poked in comparison to the wooden structural detail of all access passageways that let the postcarder scurry across within the walls, spying on employees. The concrete entrances to these passageways were built into several closets, along with lockers leading to each floor. Belhusen's brother dismantled the concrete "observation" net's jackhammer, but the ladders remained among the collection in the building slowly unfilled up.

Items originally designed for social public service continue to do their duty under the building's new management. One of the greatest tables that had fascinated Sarah since she was a child was collected from the front lobby and refinished for use in the new library. The upstairs men's lavatory—complete with junior's sink, vintage mirror, and an antique Kohler shower fixture—will function perfectly. Belhusen didn't have the heart to rip these out, so she kept much of the room, replacing the sinks to create a modern vanity area.

In June, Sarah Belhusen found herself charmed by the rhythm of small-town life that went on around her. As the table passed in her new kitchen, she could see men gabbling in front of the corner barber shop, looking back bottles of Ale 1's, a popular Kentucky soda pop. On Sundays, when services let out at the First Baptist Church across the street, all of Passaic's grown men and women. But on weekdays, the city ministry school up the block, the aged with children, all transport her to the days she spent at play in the same school yard. "Hearing children's voices outside your windows... that's the secret sound in the whole world," she says.

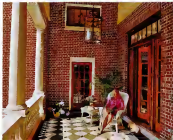
It's just one reason why Sarah Belhusen loves the PO. ■



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT**  
The original lobby is now a grill, with built-in bar and seating. Outdoors, a new sense of the past in the PO's architectural living space. The first story is original 18-foot ceilings were lowered by 2 feet to protect paper and conserve energy. Upstairs, one of the best in town new members used both rooms was designed around an original library table. One of the best in town new members used both rooms was designed around an original library table. One of the best in town new members used both rooms was designed around an original library table.

**BONUS**

Check out 30 more amazing adaptive reuse projects, or send us one of your own, at [passaic@passaic.com](mailto:passaic@passaic.com)



# Flirting With Disaster

opening your door to a rabid raccoon, or flush your cell phone down the toilet. Still, bad things do happen to good people. And so just as every Boy Scout learns to fashion a tourniquet from a T-shirt and a stick, every homeowner really ought to know what to do in the event of some worst-case scenarios in and around the house. Here's how you can squeak out of

No. 1

A wild animal is loose in the house.

**HOW TO GET:** "Don't try to herd a bird with a broom or tennis racket. It'll just panic and try to hide," says Tom Scallan, a zoologist turned wildlife control agent in Baltimore. Instead, turn off the lights and open the windows, drapes, and blinds. If it feels the air currents and fly toward the light, "I'll make sure it gets outside rather than fly into someone's finger and cut them or come scurrying into the door. If they fall, you'll need to call in."

**HOW TO KEEP THEM FROM HAPPENING TO YOU:** Prevention is a much cheaper bet than removal, says Scallan. Chimeyes and dryer vents are common entry points to install chimney caps on the flues and wrap in screen mesh dryer vent openings. To deter burrowing rodents, keep much of the area off the foundation. And if you've got lots of shingles or siding, it's your guess as to whether or not the critters will gnaw through it—these are the bests most likely to bite inside.

## CHECK No. 2

### You may have just taken down a leaning wall.

**WHAT TO DO** Look into the ceiling. If the joists are perpendicular to the old wall and the end cut is cut (probably emphasizing it slightly), it was a leaning wall—i.e., it held the weight of the house on its shoulders. Start by temporarily bracing one on either side of the removed wall by securing bats to the floor and ceiling and inserting a stud between them under each end. Cut the studs to be 1/2 inch longer than needed, says The Old House general contractor Tom Silva, and wedge them in place with a sledgehammer. Then caulk a caulk bead in gaps; you should be able to cut back the joists and install a beam in the ceiling, at which point you can take down the imposing supports and enjoy your open floor plan.

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** Do your detective work before you demo the wall. For the next part, a master electrician (seeing a red perpendicular to the joists) refers down to the basement and, after directly on a basement beam, an automatic reset switch on the story above and before it, you're assured that a contractor or engineer will look at the house or take the blueprint to your local building department for a variance (not be prepared to apply for a permit for the removal job).

## CHECK No. 3

### The basement is under 3 feet of water.

**WHAT TO DO** If the water is coming from a plumbing problem (that is, it's not coming outside), shut off the main right away—unless you have to save lost water. Houses typically have electrical wiring at least a foot off the ground, but if your heating plants add its electrical feedway be just below it. Call an electrician to call a plumber. It's a condition of light and heat for the water level today before attempting a fix.

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** You can't do much to prevent a perfect basement. After that, have better than 3000. But you can protect your basement from rain and flooding. Make sure your yard slopes away from the house and that your gutters are working properly, says Clark Campbell, chief owner of an Atlanta basement waterproofing company and president of the National Association of Waterproofing. If the problem is persistent, you may need to plug foundation cracks with epoxy or install a sump pump in the basement floor.

## CHECK No. 4

### The painter left a window open while doing the exterior, and now there's lead-paint dust inside.

**WHAT TO DO** How the kids out of the house until a decontamination, says Chicago pediatrician John D. A member of the American Academy of Pediatrics is a Committee on Environmental Health. Take them to the doctor for a blood test to check for elevated lead levels. They're exposed up all day with a HEPA vacuum and thoroughly wash all belongings, from bedding to toys to clothes. "The one thing that can really save us is the soap," says Dorn. "They should be removed and discarded."

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** If your house has built-in lead, when the use of lead paint is banned, make sure your painter follows lead-safe techniques, says Marianne Hancock, chief inspector at Atlanta Environmental and Health Safety Services, which runs a lead education program for painting contractors. For exterior painting, these include sealing windows and covering the ground around the house with 6 mil plastic sheeting, wearing proper sanding and power washing, which can spread dust, and properly disposing of debris at the end of every workday. (For complete lead-safe painting guidelines, read and act on go to [thinktooth.com/leadouts](http://thinktooth.com/leadouts).)

## CHECK No. 5

THINK YOU'VE GOT IT? NO! YOU'VE GOT IT! YOU'VE GOT IT! YOU'VE GOT IT!

## CHECK No. 5

### You lit a fire...but neglected to open the damper.

**WHAT TO DO** By using the pilot or the long tube to light your fire, you've done it. That's about it. Work, and smoke damage by closing the damper to the chimney, opening the windows, and shutting off the HVAC system. Then put out the blaze with a fire extinguisher. "You should have seen what smoke and soot," but that's a better story than you let the fire burn itself out or doused it with water, which turns soot into steam, says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification. You can open the damper, then smoke starts using a very cloth towel and a non-spraying garden hose to spray away with warm water.

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** Stay on top. Open the damper. Light the fire. Pretty simple, really. But the most important step is actually outside. "Always stay over the stove until the initial burst of burning newspaper has subsided and you're sure that it's drifting away," says Grandfather. Make sure the damper is closed. You can't see the fire, and it's a good idea to put a piece of newspaper and hold it in the firebox to get the fire going.

## CHECK No. 6

### You dropped your cell phone in the toilet.

**WHAT TO DO** Your friends may come in handy for the problem, too—otherwise, you're just going to have to make a call. It's a good idea to have a rubber glove and a piece of tape. If it gets stuck, a plunger can make the problem worse. "The phone is a narrow, flexible tube," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification. "The phone is a narrow, flexible tube," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification. "The phone is a narrow, flexible tube," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification.

## CHECK No. 7

### The house is haunted.

**WHAT TO DO** The signs of haunting: see auditory first, not out of the house by bringing it a good control expert (see No. 1). "Recommended to sleep at night and go outside at night so you'll hear them moving around at dusk and dawn," says writer Tom Scollins. Although ghosts were scary, they won't harm you, says Stephen A. Schwartz, a research associate at the Cognitive Sciences Laboratory at Palo Alto, California, and spokesperson for the Parapsychological Association. "They're entities that have become trapped in the house and they really just want help to move on," light candles or incense, perhaps, pray, meditate. "The spirits to express your intention that they leave the building," Schwartz says.

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** Good luck getting a home inspector to check for ghosts before you buy. But consider this: Do-it-yourself exorcism is kind of fun, and they make great stories.

## CHECK No. 8

### Your next-door neighbor is visiting to a bunch of frat boys.

**WHAT TO DO** You're out of luck if the frat boys are visiting to a bunch of frat boys. "You're out of luck if the frat boys are visiting to a bunch of frat boys," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification. "You're out of luck if the frat boys are visiting to a bunch of frat boys," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification.

## CHECK No. 9

### A tradesman has put a lien on your house.

**WHAT TO DO** Call a lawyer. You've put the problem contractor in jail, your contract should inform you, and you're not sure. "You've put the problem contractor in jail, your contract should inform you, and you're not sure," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification. "You've put the problem contractor in jail, your contract should inform you, and you're not sure," says Jeff Blum, technical advisor for the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification.

### HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU

**HOW TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU** How long you longer involve the contractor and don't make any payments to the GC until receiving the invoice from the GC, for a couple of hundred dollars, a little company will hold the money and release it to the GC or the subcontractors.

## Inside

It started with a West Nile scare and a sketch pad. Eleven weeks later, they finished their screened-in porch—and started enjoying the great outdoors with all the comforts of home.

By Deb Sabin, Jacksonville  
Photographs by Anthony Tardio  
Styling by Caroline Woodward

“The mosquitoes drove us to it. My wife, Leanne, and I love to spend summer evenings outdoors, lingering over a meal or just hanging out with friends. We’d gotten used to just wearing the bug spray, though with three teenage boys (and all their buddies) competing for space, we’d been knowing around the idea of adding a dedicated outdoor living area for years. But when the local paper reported that someone in a nearby town—we live in Fleming, Massachusetts—came down with West Nile, which had been killing babies in the area, we figured it was time to act.

I spent the winter sketching plans. I make my living as a mechanical engineer but have always enjoyed woodwork as a hobby. I don’t have any architectural training but, as my wife says, I have a “mechanical eye.” After scripping two drawings, we finally decided on a 16-by-19 foot screened porch with rounded columns that echo the home’s front porch, and a deck so you can get outside from our bedrooms.

We used the porch off the back corner of the dining room, a 19th-century addition that had been tucked in to our Victorian-era home. The room had leaky windows that we wanted to replace anyway.



Architectural  
drawings by Rob  
Lester, showing the  
screened porch and  
deck. (Clockwise  
from top left)  
Porch railing and  
columns: Lumber  
Liquidators (PHOTOGRAPHY)



**DISCOVERED FROM LEFT:** Green River mountain dog, Enzo, in a hammock in the new screened-in porch with its built-in mahogany flooring. Lovers relax on the sofa through one of three retractable screens. Blueberry plants create a cozy patio under the arched pergola structure, surrounded by hydrangeas, peonies and lavender. **OPPOSITE:** The couple's second-story deck, draped with curved balusters similar to ones inside the house, has glass doors to the existing deckhouse.

And the sun really beat us there, since it was the south side of the house. The previous owner had told us the house once had a wraparound porch, and we wanted to make something out of that felt like a full-size porch. To do that, we also decided to add a 20-by-12-foot pergola that would extend from the porch to the front of the house, along the living room side. We figured deciduous vines would eventually climb up and filter some sun in summer, while letting in the wind and light in winter.

Once we were ready to build, we didn't have much time to work with. We couldn't start until the ground thawed in April, and we had a seemingly insurmountable deadline of June 15, when we were leaving, as part of an exchange through our church and the Boston Children's Hospital, to move special house guests—two Roman gods who'd be making musical cars for six weeks at a local hospital. Talk about motivation.

We joked that we started the project by doing everything backwards, first landscaping and then construction. But we had a 20-year-old space and some other mature plants in the way that we wanted to use, so we hired landscape architect Jessie Smith for a consultation on how to design the future yard. We turned us on to landscaper Jack Donosowski, who moved the plants for us. He also saved us a lot of backbreaking work by agreeing on the spot of the easement to use his backhoe to dig a 4-foot-deep trench for base of the porch's right footings.



The building inspector insisted that we use large plus or minus footings, known as the porch. Next to the porch, we used smaller cast-in-place footings. I spent a week working up a plan in the morning to get the floor down in dirt and dig out the 3-foot-wide holes for the footings. But I was grateful we used such beefy footings when we got 4 feet of snow that winter.

Even more fortunately, my wife noticed that her contractor boyfriend, Ivan Diavolida, came to help. In five days, he worked more than 80 hours. Then he drove from Cape Cod on the weekend to arrive any plans, read the design to meet building code, and supply the right tools. He's kind of an animal when it comes to his work.

Together, we got up the framing, grappling with the fibreglass-reinforced concrete in that thin over 16-foot-off 4x4 posts. We looked at each 4x4 on the post before the roof deck was laid to serve in the post for the deck's balustrade and railings, to keep in from pooling up there, we needed a 1-inch gap between the board frame with a metal nail. While the house's walls were exposed, I went in about a dozen new cedar and cedar light fixtures. For

**Learn More**

For more screen porch design ideas, visit [houzz.com/projects/1070400](http://houzz.com/projects/1070400)



extra bug control, I crowded under the porch for mung to tack on screening under the newly laid mahogany floor.

The real challenge, though, came in designing the porch's walls. For a cleaner look, we were going to build frames for the screening inside the columns, instead of between them. Then we got inspired by French doors I bought to replace the dining room windows. They had tightly milled arched arched getting out with sliding screens when they'd be screened off by a screened-in porch. But then we thought, "Wouldn't it be cool to use these instead of stationary screens?" Now a single 4-foot sliding screen opens onto the porch, and two 3-foot ones open onto a walkway to the backyard.

Then we finished constructing the pergola, creating the upper lamework from pressure-treated 2x4s cut down the middle. Likewise and I tackled the rest of the pergola headgrip members. We bought some blueprints that we had an occasionally shaped patio for an outside table and chairs and surrounded it with 40 boards, which we planned off 2x4s while our kids slept. Then we added runs on the columns—elaborate, whimsical, trumpet-like, covering the porch—we did the corner it's a regular single up, corner.

After hard work paid off, though, we managed to have two days left, finished spaces when June 15 finally rolled around. Our mother, Maria and Valia, were able to enjoy the fresh air in comfort. And we now start our summer parties under the pergola, then head to the porch as the sun sets and those hungry mosquitoes start swooning us. ■

### Tell us your story

Do you remember your home and dream of the work yourself? If yes, we'd like to hear about your project. Please send photos of before and after photos, a brief description of the work yourself. If yes, we'd like to hear about your project. Please send photos of before and after photos, a brief description of the work yourself.

This DIY Master Transformations, 1235 Avenue of the Americas, 270th Street, New York, NY 10006

Or email images and descriptions to [transformations@diy-master.com](mailto:transformations@diy-master.com)

You'll receive a payment of \$250 if your home is featured

## What We Did:

Added a screened-in porch and pergola to an 1841 home.

Rebuilding cost: \$35,000

Time taken: 12 weeks

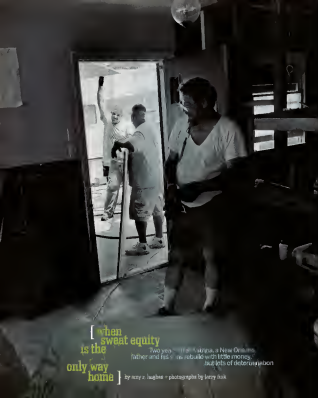
When we started, using sliding screen doors that didn't need much framing, constructing the top people frames out of stock 2x4s cut down the middle. When we replaced, instead of wood columns, we bought 18 French doors that will swing into our house and we bought Corbin's mahogany decking to give the porch a more solid feel.

What we'd do differently: Reframe the sliding screen, which when it is double or triple, it's not so much like a door. We could have built out wherever the screen is using pressure-treated wood for the deck's railing, which has since surrounded mahogany. Biggest challenge: Getting up with a way to make the rest of the pergola. How we solved it: We glued together and clamped over edges of 2x4s and 2x6s and then used a hand plane to smooth them.



The side lawn (L) offered plenty of room to move back and forth. From the back on a hungry mosquito and the new screened-in porch and pergola.





[ when  
sweat equity  
is the  
only way  
home ]

Two years after Katrina, a New Orleans father and his son rebuild with little money, but lots of determination.

by nry a. hughes • photographs by jerry dink

overcome that. Johnny knows even what's left of the Shantytown  
he has living room. He cut off the bottom section at the last where  
Katie's foundation had supported. Sam Clay (middle) and  
They living is standing for the new roof they are building.  
This roof, Johnny's youngest, David, stands forward on orders  
John while he becomes a roof rubber to the ridge beam.



JOHNNY MOORE is on the roof of his flood-wrecked home in New Orleans. But he's not working to rebuild.

For three-and-a-half days of water, just swamped the modest brick house he shared with his wife, Venus, then long since estranged. Now, two years after Hurricane Katrina struck and the house failed, Johnny is saving himself by building his house the way they live now, with his own hands. "For the contractors," says the 42-year-old, who has mostly done maintenance work at an inner-city school, "it's not nobody going to build that house but me."

Several of Johnny's neighbors in the city's Gentry section are doing the same thing, as are not too far others who have decided to stop waiting on aid and start the reconstruction on their own.

Johnny returned home three weeks after the hurricane. Maybe it was longer. He's not quite sure. "It was a period that I have to forget," he says. A jumble of debris was blocking the front door from the outside, so he had to force his way in. "The stench of rotting food in the freezer was unbearable. The wood parquet floor had buckled, mold had bloomed on the drywall, and anything that wasn't made of solid wood or metal had pretty much disintegrated." Water was everywhere, in every pot and pan. You were just hoping that your house wouldn't sink, and figuring out what to get rid of next.

The remains of what Johnny piled in his front lawn was more than an foot high and 15 feet across. All he was able to salvage was an antique mahogany bedstead and some hanging and folding trophies, as well as family photos that had hung high on a wall. The ceiling fans in the living room remain, but in black drooping shells the petals of a wilted daisy. "Everyone tells me to make that fan down, but I say no. That's my reminder of how

long the water was in here."

Johnny has yet to receive recovery grant money from the government, and he won't be getting any money from insurance—he didn't have any. Roof repairs completed two months before the hurricane cost more than expected, so Johnny made what he thought was a devastating decision: He paid the coverage with the \$100 he accrued to cover his homeowner's insurance, losing the policy before.

Now Johnny doesn't have a family. "I'd be lost without my boys," he says of sons Chip, 41, Troy, 40, and Nigel, 36. When the three

MOORE Many of New Orleans's 19th-century houses were built on raised foundations, which helped them stay dry during the flood. By contrast, the postwar shift to grade construction of the 1960s houses allowed water to flow freely into living areas, creating catastrophic damage.



brothers aren't turning bloom in members of the New Orleans First Daysmen, they are working alongside their dad.

Though their own houses were also badly damaged, the brothers' priority now is to get their dad's place in order so their mom can move back from Baton Rouge. She's been living and working there in a home half a mile street crisscrossing from New Orleans with other family members to escape Katrina. Johnny stayed behind with his sons, who spent the days after the levees broke plotting their own fishing boat around the city, gulling survivors out of windows and plucking them off

rooftops. Five trucks went useless in the flood.

"I was up there. We all were," says Troy. "Bound together at the end of each day, I'd come home for dinner. I always knew when Mom was cooking." Now, Troy and his brothers have to drive 73 miles to see Venus and to make the Cooke snuffed peppers and white beans with shrimp that reflect the Moore family's mixed African, French, and Spanish heritage.

The cluster of postwar satellite houses that form the Gentry area where Johnny and Venus have lived for the last 30 years was inundated with water for weeks after the nearby 17th Street Canal was breached. Among the city's most racially and economically diverse areas, Gentry ranks as one of the hardest hit, with only about 3,000 of its 18,000 houses occupied and more than 2,300 FEMA trailers still clearing the landscape.

One of these trailers is parked outside the Moore home. At first Johnny slept there only when he had to. But after shuffling from his job to family members' houses—where he preferred to spend the night—to his own house in progress proved too burdensome, he moved into the trailer full time.

#### [ getting to work ]

Taking the Moore home wide and empty, Johnny has stripped the majority of the place down to the studs and subfloor, and now he and his boys carry in lumber, setting up a staging area for a raised bedroom and bathroom they are building off the back. The solution is a necessary, not a luxury. When Venus could move from Baton Rouge, she'll be bringing along her elderly mother and mentally disabled sister—both of whom were displaced by the hurricane—to live in the missing two bedrooms.

Painting aqueducts hard, Nigel climbs a ladder and steadies a ceiling joist to calculate the pitch of the new roof. He calls out the

EFFORTS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN FOR REPAIRS. Nigel (left) and Chip carry their work to the roof.

► Tools for the job. Nigel, Troy, Chip and Nigel with 26-hour shifts, then come to their dad's house on their off days to help him rebuild.

► Johnny wants to stay but help his sons. Johnny with several of the old money he's making at his second job. I accept his offer.



"There were nothing but challenges here," says Johnny Moore, of returning to his waterlogged home after Katrina. Today, his three sons help him face the work ahead as a family.





#### SLIDING INTO ACTION

► Earlier this year, into this FEMA trailer, Johnny's wife, Susan, has been living in Texas. Now, while the house is under construction,

1 Balancing on the top planks, Popal measures the roof framing to make sure it's square.

2 Johnny calls down for more lumber to finish putting down a ridge.

3 During breaks from working on his own house, Carlos Gallo, 30, helps the Hanes.

"If we have a question, he sets us straight." They say of the retired carpenter. He, Gallo, has been building houses for 30 years. "Chip needs to be entering his own dream house. It was like a vision had run through his head and he said, 'I need a roof on this, it looked like a quick.'"



architect Chip and Popal (above) building her "cabin," a tiny bungalow that will be built on a lot next to her house. Popal's wife was a gift from New York City firefighters who helped rebuild his company's original house.

"If a tornado had touched down and hit one of us, our fellow firefighters would have helped. But with so many affected by this hurricane, it's every man for himself," says Chip.

measures how Troy, who trans-  
fers the angle to the end of a 2x4  
Joel and uses a circular saw to cut  
a pointed end for a rafter. Over the  
edge of the saw and pops from the  
roof just as Chap uses it to secure  
the rafters in place, an iPod plays  
"We'll That Good News," by Sam  
Cooke. It's one of Johnny's fa-  
vorite songs, and he sings along  
while working the assembly line  
his sons have created.

The Moores have a lot to feel  
hopeful about. Besides the prom-  
ise of restoring their family, they  
are putting the house back to-  
gether even better than it was be-  
fore the storm. "If we are going to  
rebuild, we are going to rebuild  
right," Johnny says. That was in  
siding insulation in walls that  
previously had none, installing  
energy-efficient windows, updat-

## [ an uncertain future ]

By late afternoon, the roof fram-  
ing is almost complete, and the  
boys are drying, with sweat in the  
hot sun. They come to Johnny's  
shop for more water, and get a  
construction update from a neigh-  
bor who has come to borrow a C-  
clamp. They also discuss the status  
of Johnny and Nigal's appeal for  
a larger grant from The Board  
Homes, a federally funded re-  
construction program designed to  
give homeowners up to \$130,000,  
minus any insurance or aid mon-  
ey they might have already in-  
vested to cover their losses. The  
Moores were offered \$60,000, but  
they're afraid it won't be enough  
to replace all that they've lost.

They hope a new offer comes



ing electrical wiring, and replac-  
ing corroded and plumbing with  
new copper lines.

Some improvements will have  
to wait, though. Johnny has al-  
ready spent most of a low interest,  
\$18,000 disaster-recovery loan  
that he secured through the U.S.  
Small Business Administration  
on lumber. "The price of materi-  
als kills you," he says. And he  
forgot about hiring professionals  
to do the work. "There's so much  
demand that it's hard to get some-  
body reputable to trace a job,  
much less finish it," Troy explains.  
"You can't buy an electrician."  
Luckily, the Moores don't have  
to. Chap trained as an electrician  
before becoming a firefighter.  
Troy's been doing his own plumb-  
ing work for years. And Nigal  
does just about everything else, in-  
cluding carpentry and tile. They  
learned most of their skills from  
their dad, a jack-of-all-trades who  
taken in his garage workshop

soon, because they've got to get  
the house finished. The Na-  
tional Weather Service predicts as  
many as five major hurricanes  
will hit the Atlantic region this  
year, with peak season beginning  
now and running through the  
end of October. Johnny acknowl-  
edges that the next big storm  
could be even more devastating  
than Katrina. But he's hoping that  
improvements such as replacing  
the old single-pane windows with  
stronger double-pane ones will  
help hold back the wind, and  
building the new addition on  
4-foot piers will foil floodwaters.  
Besides, giving up and mov-  
ing away from his boys and the  
city he loves is not an option he's  
willing to consider. "You've got  
to get out of the fan. You can't  
worry about dying. You've got  
to take the challenge," Johnny  
says and climbs back on the roof  
to help Nigal nail new shord-  
ing to the rafters. ■



View video portraits and photos of other  
New Orleans families who are rebuilding at  
[theatlantamoon.com/survivors](http://theatlantamoon.com/survivors)



### SUCCESSFULITY

After a day of  
backbreaking work at  
Johnny's place, Troy  
and his wife, Wendy  
(seated), trade hands  
and friends over for a  
celebratory meal at  
home in the  
Holy Cross section of  
New Orleans's Lower  
Ninth Ward.

Troy installs a heater  
for a new window  
opening.

"Doing a house-  
work is a piece of  
money business, but  
Johnny let me see  
their eye for the  
'colder' culture."

"Troy and Chap show  
their passion for the  
household. They're  
the past. Katrina  
never affects. All our  
anxiety about the  
household. They  
say, 'We can't  
build our own house,  
we wouldn't have been  
able to do anything.'"



# WORKSHOP

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## WORKSHOP

# Skill Building

▶ SHARE WITH YOUR KNOW-HOW WITH THESE TIPS FOR DOING ANYTHING BETTER AROUND THE HOUSE

## Resizing New Flooring to Match the Old

Give yourself a headie by cutting your new wood to width

RELATED STORY ▶ **3 EASY TIPS FOR FIXING IT UP**

Anytime you're gutting an old floor, you'll have to match the new flooring to the old. You can pay to have the wood milled to the exact dimension you want, or you can save yourself a lot of money and do the milling yourself on a table saw. It's saving money, so you should do it. Here's how to do it.

- 1. Rip the new boards.** Measure the face width of the existing floor, and the width of its tongue. Then set the table saw's fence that same distance away from the blade. Rip out the new boards to width by running the tongue side against the fence. This removes the groove, which you'll fix in the routing.
- 2. Get your groove back.** (Part 1) Set the saw's blade height equal to the depth of the groove you removed. Next, set the fence so the blade will cut into the edge of the wood directly in line with the upper face of the tongue. Make a short test cut to check that it's in the right place. Then, when everything looks your satisfaction, run all the finished boards through the saw with their ends against the fence.

(Part 2) Move the fence closer to the blade until the cut will be inline with the tongue's lower face. After a test cut, sweep each board in the same direction over the blade again, as shown. Clean out the groove with a narrow chisel and belt sander. The finished boards will now match the tongue and groove and width to match the old flooring. — **STEVE KASSEL**



## TOO TIPS

Place an exact piece of new flooring, groove side down over the (unplugged) saw's blade, then use it as a guide to set blade depth and fence position.

## Dig a Flat-Bottomed Hole

How to make an excavation that's flat for a footing, even on sloping ground

RELATED STORY ▶ **30 EASY TIPS FOR FIXING IT UP**

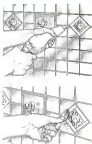
Whether you're installing the footing for a deck, digging the trench for a retaining wall, or building a below-grade footing, you need to dig where with a bottom that's level and flat. Here's how to do it. The process is nothing more than a shovel and a measuring tape. But on sloping ground, you'll need to make an extra step to help you dig. Here's how to do it.

- 1. Lay out the hole's perimeter.** The best way to dig at the lowest point is to dig your way down the slope. Continue digging toward the hole, doing your best to stay level with the tape depth.
- 2. When you're at the bottom of the hole,** drive a stake into the ground near the highest point, about 10 inches outside the marked edge of the hole. Tie a string across the stake, hang the level on the string and pull it flat across the hole. Keep the bubble centered in the level and you'll measure from the string down to the bottom of the hole at the low side. Tie the string to the bottom measurement is your guide for how deep to dig.
- 3. Take repeated measurements from the levelstick to every point in the bottom of the hole** as you add remove dirt. You're done digging when the distance from the string to the bottom is the same no matter where you hold the string over the hole.

— **DAVID L. LEE**



PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE; ILLUSTRATION: GUY LAWRENCE



## Installing Decorative Tiles

How to avoid fibing their nooks and crannies with grout

### RELATED STORY: 40 "TURTLE"

When you're put down by an all-around art life to complement your home, the last thing you want is to undertake the craftsmanship with an improper installation. And unless you enjoy picking patches of grout out of tiny crevices in the tile, you definitely don't want to fit the joints the usual way by spreading across the face of the tile with a grout float. Here's a how-toing contractor and This Old House television regular Joe Ferro's take on the problem.

**1. Set the tile.** Compactly installed through mortar and into the wall with a 1/4 inch notched trowel. Since through-set tiles often have uneven backs, apply a smooth coat of thinset to their back sides. This

will help, known as back-buttering, ensure a 100% joint bond between surface and tile.

**2. Plug the grout.** The next day, saw the edges of the set tiles with a nibbler to leave leaving only the grout in exposed. Then, wrap the grout and knock it into a grout bag (available at masonry supply stores or online). Twist the open end of the bag closed and squeeze the bag with one hand to cut and fill the joints with grout. Use the other hand to fill the joints with the bag completely.

**3. Smooth the grout.** Carefully apply the grout into the joints with the side of the grout float, or use a plastic spoon if you're more handy. Remove the float and cover up grout residue the usual way with a sponge and water. —TOTAL TOOLBOX

### TOO TIP

Before grouting, seal and/or crackle-finish tiles with an impregnating sealer to keep them from becoming discolored.



## Rx for Glass Knobs

How to use epoxy to make a door's handle whole again

### RELATED STORY: 10 "VINTAGE METAL DOOR KNOBS"

Unlike old-fashioned knobs, vintage glass knobs have an entire knuckle held at carrying base from three chunks, the central base that connects the knob to the spindle in the post. But once it's broken, it's a pain to replace. It was time to test the knob and a replacement base with the same availability of epoxy adhesives. It's possible to glue the glass and knob together and save another piece of history from the trash. Look for epoxy that gives you at least a 30-minute working time before it starts hardening.

**1. Take the knob off the door.** Loosen the set screw on the side of the knob and the knob counter-clockwise until it comes off the spindle. Remove the spindle and don't follow the spindle over the door so that someone doesn't lose the knob.

**2. Mix and apply the epoxy.** Put on gloves. Uncured epoxy can cause inflammation if it gets on

skin. Squeeze the resin out of both tubes and onto a sheet of plastic. Keep the plungers over as you push so the resin comes out in the proper proportion. Stir them together thoroughly with a pop stick or toothpick. Then, use disposable acid brush (just metal handle) to dab the epoxy on the inside of the knob rim where it touches the base of the knob and on the base of the knob itself. Or apply the epoxy directly using the Rod as a 1/2 dispenser. Don't let the epoxy cure for 30 minutes before you remove the knob.

**3. Glue the knob.** Set the knob firmly in the knob, wipe up any epoxy with acetone or denatured alcohol and a cotton swab. Then, do the assembly on the knob. Let the epoxy cure for 30 minutes. **4. Reinstall the knob.** Reinstall the knob on the door and screw the spindle back into the door. Tighten the set screw on the knob, remove the tape from the side, and the knob ought to work as good as new. —TJ

### TOO TIP

The small dual-cartridge epoxy dispensers sold in hardware stores are ideal for regluing knobs because they make it easy to squeeze out the two resins in tiny amounts at the correct ratio.

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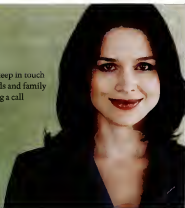
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## RAKES

### Neat and Tidy

Rather than leave my rakes and other things heaped back in a jumble in the garage, I made these simple racks (right) out of rebar and 2x4s and pieces of L-shaped dowels. I just drilled 1-inch holes in the wood at right angles, glued in the dowels, then screwed the lumber to the studs so that the dowels ended upward. As you can see, the dowel pins on the top rack are offset relative to those on the bottom rack. That way the handles on top won't interfere with the tools below. Left: rakes here also benefit, so I always put them at the top rack.



### NORM'S TIP

When pouring slabs and footings, an iron garden rake—held sideways—is just the tool to move the concrete around. With ropes up, it also levels nicely, if you don't mind it leaving a rough surface. Just don't forget to hose off the rake before the concrete on it sets.

### Working the Angles

I hold a garden rake in two basic positions, depending on what I'm trying to do. The lower the handle is to the ground, the more stuff you'll grab. The higher the handle, the more selectively you can move things around. Remember to take short strokes. It's less tiring and easier on your back than reaching long.



To break up clumps, pull out small stones and move lots of material at least the handle at a 45-degree angle.



For finish grading, sweeping the soil, raking out bark mulch or spreading soil at inch or two of ground, go with a steeper handle angle, closer to 75 degrees.

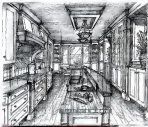


### Upside-Down Raking

To plant grass seed turn a left-hand rake or plastic leaf rake upside down. Testifying up, ensure the back of the rake to gently cover the seeds with 1/4 inch of soil.

### ONLINE NOTEBOOK

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PEEL AWAY THE LAP BOARDS of this farmhouse near the shores of Lake Michigan and you'll find a log cabin built nearly 130 years ago likely by Swedish immigrants. Thorough-hewn oak timbers were joined together in the Nordic style, using a groove-cut deep into the bottom of each log for a tight fit. After buying the place in 1904, another Swedish farmer, Charles Johnson, modernized it with plaster and siding, a raised porch, and a new wing. Over time, he also constructed several outbuildings, including a summer kitchen, a barn, a chicken coop, and a woodshed.

Charles's daughter Irene and her husband Oscar Nelson, who lived in the spread in the early 1930s, Oscar a bricklayer in nearby Chicago, spent his downtime in the workshop he built out back crafting furniture, and the oak identity still found in the parlor. Irene tended her vegetable garden, picked apples and cherries from her orchard, and gathered eggs to sell at local markets.

Oscar passed away in the 1950s. And before she died a few years ago, Irene sold her home to the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Iowa, where it is located, hoping they'd find someone to sustain it and cherish it as she and Oscar had. The pair has teamed up with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Iowa to preserve the place. 30 years later, the home with a visible rustic character and the means to finance it, the house needs a lot of patching, painting, and plumbing work, and some of the outbuildings are in dire need of stabilizing. Whoever does it could have a beautiful old home. Some of the owners's finest timber built this—the old-fashioned type for the asking. —BETH HANCOCK

If you're on a house that needs a lot of work and is currently for sale, please write to: Save This Old House, 1285 Avenue of the Americas, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10020 or save@thisoldhouse.com



(1) The hollow frame doorworks is set out. The window is in the back ground. (2) The house has a new roof but the porch was dismantled after this photo was taken and needs restoration. (3) Former owner Irene Nelson holds a bit of the cabin's log house logs. (4) The parlor was made by Oscar Nelson. (5) One of the house's five outbuildings.



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